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GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY:
IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE

BY



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Gandhi's Philosophy: in Theory and in Practice," submitted by Satpal Kaur Sodhi in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate Gandhi's philosophy as to its contribution to two ends which were deemed centrally important by Gandhi himself: (1) inculcation in the masses of a spirit of nonviolence, and (2) achievement of unity between Hindus and Muslims by a change of heart. The study consists of three parts.

In the first part an attempt is made to elucidate the concept of Satyagraha. Both the techniques of Satyagraha and the eastern and western sources of Gandhi's commitment to these techniques are described here.

The second part is devoted to the description of a number of Satyagraha campaigns. A distinction is made between campaigns in the socio-economic field and in the political field. And special attention is given to the role of Satyagraha in campaigns designed to enhance Hindu-Muslim unity.

The final part is devoted to an evaluation of Gandhian Satyagraha. It is concluded that Gandhi largely failed to attain -- or even make major advances toward -- his main objectives.

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INTRODUCTION

In this study the writer is concerned with the evaluation of Gandhi's philosophy: in theory and in practice.

The history of modern India cannot be understood apart from the career of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. From his active entry into India's political life at the end of the First World War to the achievement of Indian independence almost three decades later, his activities and his leadership had profound effect on the course of development in his country. Even after his assassination in 1948, his influence has remained a potent factor in India's evolution. Yet it is no easy task to evaluate that influence and assess its significance. From one point of view, he appears a virtual saint. Seen in another light, he seems a shrewd politician. Gandhi combined in himself the dual role of a saint and an active politician. He has been called by some 'the most saintly among the politicians' and by others the most 'political saint'. One's attitude towards a saint is a matter of devotion and personal opinion. But one's judgement on the public career of a political leader rests upon certain assumptions and expectations of a norm of conduct to be followed by him. We cannot give unto the political leader what is really due to the saint.

The two great ends of Gandhi's life, it appears to me, to which even the freedom of India was a subordinate one, were (1) to inculcate in the masses the spirit of nonviolence and (2) to bring

about unity between the Hindus and the Muslims by a change of heart. He failed miserably in both and realized it only too well toward the tag end of his life. What did he do wrong? Were the techniques he employed in achieving his professed ends not reality oriented? Or were the ends themselves impossible to attain? These are the few questions which are to be answered in this thesis.

In the first chapter I have given the theoretical framework of Gandhi's philosophy which can be referred to with a single word, "Satyagraha". I have tried to:

- (a) define "Satyagraha";
- (b) describe the techniques of Satyagraha, like nonviolent non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and fasting;
- (c) describe the metaphysical and ethical bases of Satyagraha; its roots into Hinduism;
- (d) discuss the influence of western thinkers such as Christ, Ruskin, Tolstoy and Thoreau on the development of Gandhi's philosophy.

In this chapter, I have concerned myself strictly with how this philosophy was theoretically developed by Gandhi and made no evaluation as to how it stood in actual practice.

Chapter II includes a brief description of a few of the campaigns that were led by Gandhi under the name of "Satyagraha". The following three subsections have been dealt with:

- (a) Satyagrahic campaigns in the socio-economic field, launched for the redress of certain economic and social injustices;

- (b) Satyagraha in the political field; the campaigns launched mostly against the British Indian Government to get certain political concessions;
- (c) Satyagraha and its application to 'Hindu-Muslim' unity.

The third and final chapter attempts to evaluate Gandhi's philosophy as it actually stood in practice. My conclusion is that: In spite of Gandhi's assertions to the contrary, there was an element of coerciveness in the Satyagrahic techniques that he employed for the attainment of his ends.

I have also concluded that though Satyagrahic actions could comparatively remain nonviolent in the social spheres, in political arena they invariably led to violence. Though Gandhi could perhaps have used these nonviolent techniques successfully in certain social and cultural contexts, using them for revolutionary political objectives was asking for too much. Persuasion is possible, and compromise is permissible in many conflicts in which we get involved in our daily life, but persuasion is not always possible and compromise is not always permissible when principles of life or vital interests of mankind are involved. In such cases, a real situation of conflict does arise. And these cases can be resolved only through the use of force, coercion or at least by some kind of pressure and not by purely nonviolent means as advocated by Gandhi.

It has also been argued in this chapter that though Gandhi wanted his followers to practice nonviolence as a creed and not as an expediency, most of his followers and co-workers could never adopt it

as a matter of principle. Even Gandhi's own actions and writings give one an ambivalent feeling on this issue. An analysis of his activities betrays a tendency on Gandhi's part to equate expediency with principle.

An attempt has also been made to show that Gandhi's religious ideology, his religious practices and his attempt to mix religion with politics proved, to some extent, hindrances to his objective of attaining Hindu-Muslim unity.

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CHAPTER I

SATYAGRAHA: ITS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Definition of "Satyagraha":

"Satyagraha" literally means "holding on to truth", or "insistence on truth". And as "Truth" for Gandhi was God, "Satyagraha" in the general sense of the word means the way of life of one who holds steadfastly to God and dedicates his life to Him.

Such an individual comes across injustice, cruelty, exploitation and oppression. These he has to oppose with all the resources at his command. In his crusade, his reliance is on "Truth" or God and "Truth" can be obtained only by loving service of all, i.e. by nonviolence. Gandhi defined "Satyagraha" as the "vindication of truth, not by the infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's own self."¹ Satyagraha was described by Gandhi as a soul force or a moral force.

Gandhi originally described his movement in South Africa as "Passive Resistance". However, he was always conscious that he had designed and discovered a new principle which was not fully described by the term "Passive Resistance" which he had borrowed from Count Leo Tolstoy. Therefore, he announced in his newspaper which he published in South Africa that a prize would be given to one who would find out a suitable name to describe his movement against the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance introduced into The Transvaal

¹M.K. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings of Gandhi, (Madras: Natesan and Company), p. 501.

Legislature Council in 1906. One of the readers of his paper 'Indian Opinion', Maganlal Gandhi, suggested the word "Satagraha" (sat meaning truth, agraha meaning firmness). This gave him the clue and he wrote, "I liked the word, but it did not fully represent the whole idea I wished to connote. I therefore corrected it to 'Satyagraha'."² The word "Satyagraha" was deliberately substituted by Gandhi, both because he felt ashamed to use an English word and also because he wanted to emphasize that there was an essential difference between his movement and "Passive Resistance". As Gandhi himself put it:

Satyagraha differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence, for the purpose of gaining one's end; whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest, and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form.³

Satyagraha is a positive doctrine of resistance which, though active, is nonviolent. It is sharply distinguished from violent resistance in the sense that nonviolence is the peculiar attribute which attends this resistance. However, it is not passive because it is nonviolent, but the moral resistance of the movement is active and determined as the violent resistance of a traditional fighter. In Passive Resistance, nonviolence is of a man who is not wedded to it and who accepts nonviolence not as a matter of principle but as a matter of expediency. Nonviolence, for a passive-resister,

²M.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, (Ahmedabad), p. 172.

³R.C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement in India, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay), p. 8.

is a matter of policy and may be given up as and when violence proves or has the chance of proving more suitable or convenient for a particular occasion. A Satyagrahi accepts nonviolence as a matter of principle and as a way of life. A Satyagrahi accepts love and nonviolence and these for him are virtues which have universal application. Even an enemy is not to be hated by a Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi hates evil but not the evil-doer. Gandhi hated the British system in India but not the British in India. A passive-resister does not necessarily make such subtle and fine distinctions between the evil and the evil-doer. Moreover, the passive-resister may aim to embarrass the opponent into submission; the Satyagrahi wins him over through love, persuasion and self-suffering. In Passive Resistance there is normally no place for love for the opponent; in Satyagraha there is no room for hatred, ill-will and the like. Also, Satyagraha is dynamic, Passive Resistance is static. The Satyagrahi loves the opponent as a human being and aims at rousing him to a sense of equity by an appeal to the best in him, i.e. at converting him. Conversion implies that the opponent realizes his mistake, repents and there takes place a peaceful adjustment of differences. As Gandhi once remarked to Miss Agatha Harrison, "The essence of nonviolent technique is that it seeks to liquidate antagonisms but not the antagonists."⁴ He wrote in 1940, "The end of nonviolent 'war' is always an agreement, never dictation, much less humiliation of the opponent."⁵ Thus a Satyagrahi fights with a

⁴Harijan, April 29, 1939, p. 101.

⁵Ibid., March 23, 1940, p. 53.

view to bilateral and not unilateral victory. He aims at the integration and not suppression of legitimate differences.

The aim indicates the method. Negatively, the Satyagrahi should try to avoid violence in all forms. Violence seeks to destroy the opponent or at least to injure him, and this is not the way to convert or reform him. The Satyagrahi should try to avoid all intentional injury to the opponent in thought, word and deed. Thus he should not harbour anger, hatred, ill-will, suspicion, vindictiveness or other similar divisive feelings. In his actions he should not rely on brute force, for to do so is to cooperate with the evil-doer and lend him support. In spite of all the provocation, the Satyagrahi should not be intolerant and vindictive, and should not frighten the opponent.

Positively, "A Satyagrahi will always try to overcome evil by good, anger by love, untruth by truth, himsa by ahimsa."⁶ The Satyagrahi who is conscious of the working of soul-force and of his own spiritual kinship with the opponent, should treat him as a member of his family. To wean the opponent from his error he should use the domestic method which makes the resolution of the conflict easy by minimizing differences and emphasizing points of agreement. Said Gandhi, "I must apply the same rules to the wrong-doer who is my enemy as I would to my wrong-doing father or son."⁷

Gandhi attached very great importance to suffering. He calls Satyagraha "the law of suffering". He wrote, "Nothing can

⁶Young India, August 8, 1929.

⁷Gandhi, Speeches ..., op. cit., p. 284.

shake me from the conviction that given a good cause, suffering for it advances it as nothing else has done."⁸ There is no limit to the suffering that an act of Satyagraha may entail. The Satyagrahi must exercise restraint under the gravest provocation and cheerfully bear all sorts of losses and inconveniences - assaults, beating, excommunication, loss of property, even death. He must be willing to stake his all except honour.

Gandhi talked of the psychological impact of nonviolence and self-suffering by pointing out how, "the wrong-doer wearies of wrong-doing in the absence of resistance. All pleasure is lost when the victim betrays no resistance."⁹ And again he emphasized,

I seek entirely, to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul would at first dazzle him and at last compel recognition from him which recognition would not humiliate him but uplift him.¹⁰

Thus the three basic precepts of "Satyagraha" are "Truth", "Non-violence" and "Self-Suffering".

Techniques of Satyagraha

Satyagraha, in the narrower sense, takes many forms. Primarily it is a case of appealing to the reason and conscience of

⁸Young India I., p. 231.

⁹Gandhi, Speeches ..., op. cit., p. 639.

¹⁰Young India, Vol. 11, p. 804 as quoted in O.P. Goyal, Studies in Modern Indian Political Thought, (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, Pvt. Ltd., 1964).

the opponent and make him one's willing ally and friend. It is based on the idea that the moral appeal to the heart and conscience is, in the case of human beings, more effective than an appeal based on threat of bodily pain or violence. Indeed, violence, according to Gandhi, does not ever overcome evil, - it suppresses it for the time being to make it rise later with redoubled vigour. Nonviolence, on the other hand, if effective, puts an end to evil by converting the evil-doer.

K.J. Shridharani, in his book 'War without Violence', has tried to elaborate the different stages of nonviolent direct action.

The first stage in Satyagraha is negotiation and arbitration with the adversary. Under these terms, Shridharani includes the use of legislative channels, direct negotiations and arbitration by third parties.¹¹

The second step in Satyagraha is agitation, the purpose of which is to educate the public on the issues at stake, to create the solidarity that is needed in the later stages of the movement, and to win acceptance by the members of the movement of the methods to be employed.¹²

Only after negotiations and arbitration have failed, does Satyagraha make use of the techniques which are usually associated with it in the popular mind.

Non-cooperation is easily the most popular form. It may include surrender of all titles of honour and the voluntary giving up

¹¹Krishanalal J. Shridharani, War without Violence: the Sociology of Gandhi's Satyagraha, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), pp. 5-7.

¹²Ibid., pp. 7-12.

of all honorary offices, boycotting of law courts by litigants which would amount to the suspension of legal practice by lawyers and the settlement of civil disputes by private arbitration. It may include also boycotting of government schools and colleges, withdrawal from governmental services, withdrawal of men from army and police.

Non-cooperation is a form of direct action, yet it is a constitutional form of direct action. It is the right of Satyagrahi to refuse to cooperate with a ruler who misrules. The whole technique of non-cooperation is, in fact, based upon the assumption that no ruler, however strong and despotic, can rule without the cooperation of those of are ruled.

The purpose of non-cooperation is "to rid ourselves of the feeling of helplessness by being independent of all governmental control or supervision, i.e. to govern ourselves in all possible affairs."¹³ Being independent, however, does not mean creating disorder or anarchy. In fact, possibilities of anarchy are eliminated due to the peculiar attributes of the Gandhian system of non-cooperation. Gandhian non-cooperation is nonviolent non-cooperation. Moreover, it is self-sacrificing non-cooperation. Thus Gandhi said:

Intolerance is a species of violence and therefore against our creed. Nonviolent non-cooperation is an object lesson in democracy. The moment we are able to ensure nonviolence, even under circumstances the most provoking, that moment we have achieved our end, because this is the moment when we can offer complete non-cooperation.¹⁴

¹³Young India, April 6, 1921.

¹⁴Ibid., January 19, 1921.

Non-cooperation is not against a person or persons. It is against the system of which the person or persons are merely the victims. In order to be effective, non-cooperation against a system must be non-cooperating, not with a part, but with the whole system. Non-cooperation is also not cooperating with whatever is convenient and non-cooperating with whatever is inconvenient in a particular system. Thus a non-cooperator must be willing to renounce all services and privileges.¹⁵

Satyagraha in the political sphere assumes the form of civil disobedience. It is for this form of Satyagraha that Gandhi came to be most reputed. It means mass resistance on a nonviolent basis against the government where negotiations and constitutional methods have failed. The civil character of Satyagraha is maintained by the inviting of and the voluntary submitting to the sanctions provided by the law for actions contrary to the legal norm. Civil also means strictly nonviolent.¹⁶

A government paralyzed by organized non-cooperation awaits its destruction through the satyagrahic maneuver of civil disobedience. What remains of a state after a successful onslaught of non-cooperation is nothing more than a formal structure. It is up to the civil disobedience to shatter that structure as a prelude to a new order. The phrase "civil disobedience" was coined by the American moralist, Henry Thoreau. According to him, civil disobedience to unjust laws

¹⁵Goyal, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁶Gopinath Dhawan, The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951), p. 258.

is the duty of all citizens. In Gandhi's hands, however, the technique outgrew its original import. It became a revolutionary weapon for destroying an undesirable political order.¹⁷

Gandhi grants to every citizen the right and, much more than that, the duty of civil disobedience in certain circumstances. He maintained very emphatically that it is the right and duty of every individual to rise against an intolerable law.¹⁸ Complete civil disobedience is the substitute of armed warfare.¹⁹ The complete civil resister ignores the authority of the state. One by one, or simultaneously, the important laws and decrees of the state are broken, so that eventually the entire rule is uprooted. It is important, Gandhi insisted time and again, that only unpopular and obnoxious laws be broken at the beginning of a Satyagraha. This restriction ensures the eventual conversion of government men who are at heart in agreement with the Satyagrahis as to the injustice of the laws in question. Gandhi believed that only the breaking of unjust statutes attracts the sympathy of the general public and of world opinion.

A government that is faced with civil disobedience may, of course, arrest and imprison all law breaking individuals and groups. The Satyagrahis, in that eventuality, were pledged not to defend themselves but rather to accept the punishment willingly.

¹⁷ Shridharni, op cit., p. 33.

¹⁸ Young India, June 9, 1920.

¹⁹ Goyal, op cit., p. 33.

Satyagraha may, at times, take the form of fasting. Fasting should be undertaken, according to Gandhi, only when all other methods have failed, and as a last resort, and never for personal gain. It should seek to influence the opponent by converting him, not by coercing him. Fasting is the ultimate and the most potent weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha. Gandhi called it a 'fiery weapon' and claimed to have reduced it to a science. Non-cooperation brings passive suffering inflicted by the opponent; fasting is suffering self-inflicted. As against non-cooperation, it is of strictly limited application, and the distinction between its use and misuse, between satyagrahi fasting and duragrahi fasting or hunger strike, is discernible with much greater difficulty than in the case of non-cooperation.

Fasting may be used as a penance of purification for fuller self-expression, i.e. for the attainment of the spirit's supremacy over the flesh. It then refers to one's own mistakes and failings and is a great discipline and a most powerful factor in one's evolution. Fasting is also a means of resisting injustice and converting the evil-doer. As such, it is "the highest expression of the prayer of a pure and loving heart."²⁰ It is an appeal to the wrong-doer's better nature with the objective of evoking the best in him.

But this weapon cannot be lightly wielded. It can be resorted to on rare occasions and by one skilled in the art or under expert guidance. If undertaken without previous preparation and adequate thought, it is not a Satyagraha fast but a hunger strike.

²⁰Dhawan, op. cit., p. 165.

Gandhi laid down the qualifications of the person who can use this form of Satyagraha and the occasion on which it can be properly resorted to.²¹ Mere physical capacity to fast is no qualification. Thus Satyagrahi must possess spiritual fitness and a clear vision. A living faith in God is also indispensable. In a Satyagrahi fast there can be no room for lack of faith, anger, impatience, or selfishness. These make the fast violent.

The extreme form of civil disobedience is the establishment of a parallel government. This has been termed the "Assertive Satyagraha".²² It is the most dangerous form of Satyagraha and, therefore, a measure of last resort to be employed only when all other alternatives have been exhausted. This "Assertive Satyagraha" is an aggressive measure which, though it appears to be constructive, is based on the destruction and paralysis of the machinery of the existing government. This very tempting and therefore most dangerous stage of Satyagraha was never used by Gandhi himself.

Metaphysical and Ethical Bases of Satyagraha

"Most religious men I have met," Gandhi once remarked, "are politicians in disguise: I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man."²³ This statement provides a key to

²¹M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, The Story of My Experiments With Truth, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1940), p. 213.

²²Shridharni, op. cit., p. 58.

²³Gandhi, Speeches ..., op. cit., p. 40.

Gandhian philosophy. Gandhi's bent was not political but religious. In all his thought and action, he took his stand on the principles of religion and morality. His political philosophy and political techniques are only corollaries of his religious and moral principles. For him, politics bereft of religion is a death trap because it kills the soul, for politics, like other human activities, must be governed either by religion or irreligion. By religion, however, Gandhi meant, not any particular creed, - not, for example, Hindu religion, but that which underlies and harmonizes all religions, a belief in the ordered moral government of the universe.²⁴

Gandhi looked upon politics as an unavoidable evil. "If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics today encircles us like the coils of a snake from which one can not get out no matter how one tries. I wish to wrestle with the snake ... I am trying to introduce religion into politics."²⁵ Thus it was religion that compelled him not to eschew politics. The goal of Gandhi's life was self-realization which, he believed, could not be achieved unless he identified himself with the whole of mankind and tried to advance the greatest good of all. This necessarily involved taking part in politics.

A living, unshakable faith in God, an insistence on the primacy of soul is the core of his philosophy. Gandhi was of the opinion that the fullest life is impossible without such faith and

²⁴Dhawan, op. cit., p. 41.

²⁵Gandhi, Speeches ..., op. cit., p. 807.

that one is not competent to offer Satyagraha unless one has a living faith in God, because living faith in nonviolence is impossible without having a living faith in God. Without it one will not have the courage to die without anger, without fear and without retaliation. Such courage comes from the belief that God sits in the heart of all and that there should be no fear in the presence of God. On the other hand, dismissal of God from common affairs gives rise to a feeling of helplessness and induces people to put their faith in violence. As observed earlier, Gandhi identified God with Truth.

Again according to Gandhi, the ultimate object of man's life is self-realization and self-realization means seeing God face to face., realizing Absolute Truth. So Gandhi, in search of an Absolute Truth, concerned himself more intensively with the means whereby the realization of such truth might be advanced.

But Gandhi was fully aware that the absolute can not be known by the yet unfulfilled human mind.²⁶ He didn't claim to know the truth in any absolute sense and often reminded others that man's inability to know the truth required that he maintain always an open approach to those who would differ with him. That is why he wrote, "that pursuit of truth didn't admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For whatever appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other."²⁷

²⁶Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 16.

²⁷Jag Parvesh Chander, ed., Teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, (Lahore: The Indian Printing Works, 1945), p. 494.

To proceed towards the goal of Truth - truth in the absolute sense - the way must lead through the testing of relative truths as they appear to the individual performer. The testing of truth can be performed only by strict adherence to ahimsa - action based upon the refusal to do harm. Here nonviolence becomes the supreme value. Hence, closely connected with the ultimate end is the problem of means. In Gandhian philosophy, means and ends are convertible terms. The two are inseparable and should be equally pure. That the end was high and laudable was not enough for Gandhi; the means too must be moral. Moreover, the end grows out of the means. To quote Gandhi, "the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."²⁸

Moreover, the Gita doctrine of Nishkama Karma (action without attachment) also taught Gandhi that a good deed produces only a good result. So Gandhi believed that if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself. The means are ends in the process. Furthermore, Gandhi insisted that realization of the goals is in exact proportion to that of means. He illustrated this by saying:

"If I want to deprive you of your watch I shall certainly have to fight for it; if I want to buy your watch I shall have to pay for it; and according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property or a donation. Thus we see three different results from three different means."²⁹

²⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, (Madras: G.A. Natesan and Company, 1908), p. 60.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

However, his insistence on the purity and morality of means does not mean that Gandhi was indifferent to the purity or morality of the ends. He did not seek to reverse the machiavellian dictum that the "end justifies everything". He never meant to say that the means justify everything. On the other hand, he was emphatic that the means and ends are inseparably connected and the means used should in no way detract from the moral character of the end. Hence his repeated insistence that our means must be as pure as our end. Moreover, his insistence had universal scope and application. For Gandhi, life is an organic whole and cannot therefore be divided into different watertight compartments. There was nothing like a political life different from a religious life for Gandhi.

Satyagraha and the Hindu Culture

The essential elements of Satyagraha - truth, nonviolence, and self-suffering - had, for the Hindu, roots in their corresponding traditional precepts.³⁰ Gandhi was, above all else, a Hindu. In spite of the fact that he studied in the West, the main source of Gandhi's inspiration was always Hinduism. He frequently expressed himself to that effect in his autobiography. In tracing the origin and growth of the satyagrahic ideology, one cannot possibly disregard the most outstanding and conspicuous footprints - such as Vedas, Upanishads, Jainism, Buddhism, and Asokaism.

³⁰ Bondurant, op. cit., p. 107.

Vedas

The primeval rudiments of Gandhi's Satyagraha or nonviolent direct action were latent in Indo-Aryans' ancient practice of sacrifice. By offering corn, animal life, or human life to their gods, the Aryans expected the gods to return the compliment with happiness on earth and bliss in heaven. Thus the rustic practice of sacrifice that the Aryans brought to India was a pure form of propitiation. Underlying this conception of sacrifice was the common-sense notion that by relinquishing to God the persons, animals, or things that are dear to himself, the votary undergoes suffering and, thereby, gains God's favor, "For the depths of one's affection for God consists in the surrender of one's property and possessions to Him."³¹ The far-reaching assumption involved here is that suffering, self-imposed and born in the spirit of sacrifice, is the most potent of appeals; that even the most whimsical of gods cannot resist the power of suffering. Born of sacrifice, suffering is the human power which produces desired ends and defeats evil.

Gandhi's contribution lies in the fact that he applied this potentiality of suffering born through sacrifice to the social polity. Down under all the complex and refined modern manifestations of the doctrine of nonviolent direct action is the faith that desired ends may be attained through suffering, when it is voluntary and undertaken in the spirit of sacrifice.

³¹S. Radakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, (London, 1929), p. 107.

Upanishads

The simple religion of the Vedas was patterned around the act of sacrifice, and the vigorous hymns that form the texts of Vedas deal in some way or other with that performance. They reflect the mentality of a race which was warlike, sturdy and conquering. However, the new environment, especially, perhaps, the unflagging fertility of the Indian soil, wrought fundamental changes in their notions and behaviour patterns. The practice of sacrifice became an institution in itself with its mass of formalized rites and rituals. These efforts, which took place between 1000 B.C. and 3000 B.C. are immortalized in the Upanishads.

While adhering to the forms of sacrifice, the Upanishads sought to refine them. They introduced new interpretations of sacrifice and dressed some of them in allegories.³² They shifted the burden of sacrifice to the subjective existence of votary. They preached that all sacrifices are for the sake of realizing one's own self. The barbaric formalism of the Vedic sacrifice was thus given a new twist and, consequently, was humanized. The Upanishads constituted suffering, undergone in a spirit of sacrifice, as the main performance and relegated sacrificial ritualism to a secondary position. From this point on, the idea of Ahimsa, which underlies and conditions Gandhi's Satyagraha, becomes a strong, brightly defined thread in the fiber of India's cultural history.

Jainism

Although suffering supplanted sacrifice as the first pre-requisite for earthly well-being and heavenly bliss, slaves and

³²Shridharni, op. cit., p. 171.

animals were still being sacrificed. The loss of one's slaves or cattle or harvest was held to be sufficient evidence of one's pain and suffering. The sacrificial discipline of the Brahmins first met revolt during the epic period (600 B.C. to 200 A.D.) of the Indo-Aryans in the form of Jainism. The doctrine of Ahimsa - non-injury in thought, word, or deed to any breathing thing - was invoked in order to raise a lasting barrier against slaughter in the name of sacrifice. This, however, did not eliminate the notion of suffering as a means to attain an end. What it did do was to transform suffering into suffering of the ego and it evolved an intricate system of self-negation.

Buddhism

Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, born in 583 B.C., has also left his imprint upon the tortuous path that eventually led to Gandhism. The suffering in the world, and the violence of mankind, diagnosed Buddha, sprang from human "interestedness" and greed. It cannot be defeated, this redeemer contended, by extreme actions. Only love and compassion would emerge triumphant. Thus the negative doctrine of Ahimsa, as preached in Jainism, assumed a more positive form through the housecleaning given it by Buddha.

Thus the rustic practice of sacrifice that Aryans brought to India was gradually, though at a much later stage, refined into theory of self-sacrifice and suffering which in its turn crystallized in the positive doctrine of Ahimsa or non-injury. It cannot be over-emphasized that the history of Indian culture is the history of the

growth of the idea of Ahimsa. Naturally there have been wars in the course of India's history, but they have been few when compared to the histories of other nations of analogous magnitude and equipment. India has, furthermore, never sent her armies to conquer other countries. And in India itself, fighting was restricted to Kshatriyas alone, leaving the bulk of castes to peaceful pursuits.

Bondurant, in her book 'Conquest of Violence', has developed the theory that Gandhi's transformation or adaptation of Hindu tradition to develop a social and political technique would dismiss the characterization of Gandhi as merely a Hindu revivalist.³³ She maintains that while calling upon illustrations from Indian mythology, Gandhi transformed ahimsa into the active social technique which was to challenge both political authority and religious orthodoxy. She concluded:

When the evidence is sifted one is struck by the conclusion that the significant contribution of Gandhi lay not in any revival of traditional forms or method, but in a transformation of traditional concepts in such a way that only the symbols remained familiar - for the symbols were made by Gandhi to stand for a quite different set of values.³⁴

Satyagraha and the Influence of the Western Thinkers

Christ

It is interesting to note that about ninety percent of Gandhi's contacts in England, as a student, were with people of pronounced religious convictions. Naturally he broke bread with many

³³Bondurant, op. cit., p. 107.

³⁴Ibid., p. 5.

illustrious Christians and under their tutoring he made a comprehensive study of Christianity in general and of Christ's life in particular.

The Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament made a profound impression on Gandhi. In the text, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil but whoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," he saw India's Ahimsa epitomized. Gandhi could fully appreciate the beauty of Christ's life, since it was also a life of true nonviolent resistance. Here was a man who died to save men who refused to listen to his teachings. Christ's words, "Love your enemies; pray for them that persecute you," have played a decisive role in molding Gandhi's policies. Gandhi called Jesus the Prince of Satyagrahis and said that he would not hesitate to call himself a Christian if he had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and his own interpretation of it.³⁵ It was Christ's example of determination against great odds, it becomes evident on reading Gandhi's autobiography, that stimulated Gandhi to go on with his Satyagraha experiments.

Thoreau

Gandhi was also influenced by the words and actions of Henry David Thoreau, the well-known American anarchist who refused to pay his taxes as a protest against slavery in America. Thoreau's almost single-handed fight against slavery imbued Gandhi with the faith that it is not number of the resisters that counts in a Satyagraha, but the purity of the sacrificial suffering.

³⁵C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1929), p. 93.

Ruskin

Ruskin's 'Crown of Wild Olives' is also one of Gandhi's favorites. Gandhi resembles Ruskin in several respects. Both preach the supremacy of the spirit and trust in the nobility of human nature; to both character is more important than intelligence; both seek to moralize politics and economics; both emphasize the priority of social regeneration to mere political reform.³⁶ But Ruskin does not stand for nonviolence in principle. All the same, he is against vengeance and retribution and urges the workers not to take part in armament industries.

Tolstoy

From the west, too, comes another influence upon Gandhi, that of Count Leo Tolstoy, who produced such a lasting effect upon Gandhi that he considered himself "a devoted admirer who owes much in life to him."³⁷ Tolstoy's 'The Kingdom of God is within You' appealed to Gandhi so much that in his youth he entered into correspondence with its author.

The principle of nonviolence as applied to social problems is found in Tolstoy's conviction that spiritual force has been, is now, and ever shall be the only force by which progress is made. "The sole guide which directs men and nations," wrote Tolstoy, "has always been and is the unseen, intangible, underlying force, the resultant

³⁶ Dhawan, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁷ Young India, I., p. 652.

of all the spiritual forces of a certain people, or of all humanity, which finds its outward expression in public opinion."³⁸

Thus, in brief, we have considered in this chapter the theoretical framework of Satyagraha - its definition; its techniques; its metaphysical and ethical bases; its roots in the Hindu culture; and the influence exerted on it by western thinkers.

³⁸L. Tolstoy, The Kingdom of God is within You, (New York, 1894), p. 250.

CHAPTER II

SATYAGRAHA IN ACTION

This chapter will include a brief description of a few of the campaigns that were led by Gandhi under the name of "Satyagraha". The following three subsections will be dealt with:

- (a) Satyagrahic campaigns in the socio-economic field, launched for the redress of certain economic and social injustices;
- (b) Satyagraha in the political field; the campaigns launched, mostly, against the British Indian Government to get certain political concessions;
- (c) Satyagraha and its application to 'Hindu-Muslim' unity.

(a) Satyagrahic campaigns in the socio-economic field:

Champaran Campaign (1917)

One of the first calls for help came to Gandhi from a quarter he had not thought of. Champaran lies beside Nepal and the Himalayas, a country of mango groves and legends. It is situated in the north-western corner of Bihar. Its area is about 3,500 square miles, its population a couple of million, mainly Hindu and almost entirely rural. The only towns are Motihari and Bettiah. In 1917 Champaran was a preserve of English planters who, for more than half a century, had owned most of the arable land and imposed an almost feudal regime.

Under a contract system known as tinkathia, the tenants had to plant three-twentieths of their holdings with indigo, and hand over the indigo harvest as a part of their rent. It went into dye factories belonging to the English. Tinkathia had contributed to futile waves of unrest that swept over Champaran at intervals. However, the worst grievance dated from the years just before the war, when new synthetic dyes were driving indigo from the world market and making it an unprofitable crop. The landlords protected themselves before the tenants found out. They offered to end the indigo contract in exchange for an increase in rent or a lump sum. After the first glad acceptances the tenants did find out, and the intake of pseudo-compensation threatened to dwindle. But the planters had a tight grip on the district and plenty of money to hire agents. Peasants who demurred at the new agreements were forced into signing. They were beaten up, or arrested on false charges; their houses were looted, their cattle stolen. From 1912 to 1914, with the aid of the special registrars furnished by the Government, Champaran's landlords secured thrity thousand revised tenancies, with rent increases in the order of 60 percent and cash payments totalling Rs. 90,000 as recompense for relinquishing a crop that was worthless anyhow.¹ Meanwhile they assured outsiders that their tenants were happy and that such trouble as occurred was stirred up by agitators from Bengal.

Gandhi was present at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in December 1916 when the Champaran troubles came up for discussion. He was invited to take part in it, but declined

¹Geoffrey Ashe, Gandhi, (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 139.

for the simple reason that he knew nothing about the matter. Champaran was for him no more than a dot on the map of India. After the congress session, Rajkumar Shukla, a peasant from Champaran, requested Gandhi to visit the district and see things for himself. Shukla's tenacity was remarkable; he followed Gandhi from one end of the country to the other, until he escorted him to Champaran and confronted him with a problem which had strained the relations between the planters and the peasants for nearly a century.

Rajkumar Shukla had given Gandhi some details of the planter-tenant conflict in Champaran. After arriving in Bihar, Gandhi learnt enough to become anxious to investigate the facts for himself. From Patna he went to Muzaffarpur and from Muzaffarpur to Motihari, the headquarters of the district of Champaran. He was served with a notice to quit the district 'by the next available train' as his presence was considered a danger to public peace. He refused to comply. He told the magistrate who tried him on April 18, 1917:

"As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty towards those for whom I have come. I am fully conscious of the fact that a person holding, in the public life of India, a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example... I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."²

The Commissioner of Tirhut Division had ordered Gandhi's arrest without consulting his superiors. But the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council considered that it was clearly impossible at this stage to

²Mohandas K. Gandhi, An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1940), pp. 281-282.

prevent a man of Mr. Gandhi's experience from making his enquiries and the course adopted by the Commissioner could only excite public interest and create the suspicion that the Government wished to stifle the enquiry. Orders were, therefore, issued to the Commissioner and the District Officer to give Mr. Gandhi every reasonable facility.

Gandhi was now at liberty to continue his investigations into the peasants' grievances; he carefully sifted the evidence, cross examined each witness searchingly and discouraged exaggeration. An officer from the C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department) would always be present when these statements were recorded. The very fact that the statements were taken down in the presence of the C.I.D. officers made the peasants more fearless. At the same time, the presence of C.I.D. officers exercised a natural restraint on exaggeration.³

When thousands of such statements were recorded they could not but have their effect. The ever-growing number of peasants coming to make their statements increased the planters' wrath and they moved heaven and earth to counteract Gandhi's enquiry. Gandhi received a letter from the Bihar Government to the effect that his enquiry had been sufficiently prolonged. Gandhi wrote in reply that the enquiry was bound to be prolonged and unless or until it resulted in bringing relief to the people, he had no intention of leaving Bihar. Now the Government of India felt perturbed at Gandhi's presence in Champaran and the possibilities of a Satyagraha struggle developing in the indigo district of Bihar. So the Government of India advised the Government of

³Ibid., p. 287.

Bihar to appoint a Commission of Inquiry on which a seat could be offered to Gandhi as well. Gandhi agreed to serve on the Commission but on the condition that in case the result of Inquiry failed to give him satisfaction he should be free to guide and advise the peasants as to what line of action they should take. And thus the Champaran Agrarian Committee was appointed.

With the evidence of 8,000 tenants on his hand, there was no aspect of the Agrarian problem with which Gandhi was not thoroughly acquainted. Knowledgeable, persuasive and firm, he was able to make out an irresistible case for the tenants.⁴ The Committee unanimously recommended the abolition of the oppressive 'tinkathia system', and of the illegal exactions under which the tenants groaned. As for the illegal recoveries, the Committee recommended a twenty-five percent refund. In spite of the planters' protest, Sir Edward sponsored a bill giving these recommendations the force of law. Gandhi could claim a classic victory. The only civil disobedience had been his own, and its effect confirmed a long cherished belief that individual Satyagraha could be potent.

The Ahmedabad Labour Satyagraha (1917)

While Gandhi was engaged in Bihar, trouble was brewing in the textile industry of Ahmedabad. Since August 1917 a plague 'bonus', equivalent in some cases to eighty percent of the wages, was being paid to dissuade the labourers from fleeing the plague-ravaged town.

⁴B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1958), p. 160.

When the epidemic was over, the employers wanted to discontinue the 'bonus'. The workers resisted the move arguing that the cost of living had more than doubled during the war and appealed for fifty percent increase.

Apprehending a showdown between the mill owners and their employees, the British collector of Ahmedabad wrote to Gandhi to exert his influence with the mill owners for a compromise. Gandhi went to Ahmedabad and began his own investigation. Both sides agreed to submit the dispute to an arbitration board consisting of three representatives from each side. Gandhi was one of those appointed on behalf of the workers. Before this tribunal could commence its work, the mill owners took advantage of a stray strike, declared the agreement void, backed out of arbitration and announced that the workers who declined to accept a twenty percent bonus would be dismissed.

Gandhi waded through a mass of data on the production costs and profits of the textile industry in Ahmedabad and Bombay, the cost of living and market conditions, and came to the conclusion that a raise of thirty-five percent was justified. The workers who had been demanding a fifty percent increase in wages were persuaded by Gandhi to accept thirty-five percent. Gandhi had been invited by the collector of Ahmedabad to use his good offices with the mill owners, but the latter's refusal to accept arbitration now led him to champion the workers' grievances.

Gandhi took up the workers' cause as another experiment in Satyagraha. The crucial question was whether the just demand of textile labour at Ahmedabad could be won by a peaceful, non-violent strike. The strike, organized on the principles of Satyagraha, was to

be different from the familiar pattern. The instructions laid upon the Satyagrahis were: no violence, no molestation of "blacklegs"; no dependence upon alms, and no surrender, however long the strike.⁵ There was to be no room for bitterness, for fabrication of grievances or exaggeration of claims. The strikers' enforced idleness was to be utilized in constructive activities: alternative trades were to be learnt, houses were to be repaired, and roads in workers' colonies were to be swept. The Satyagrahis had to take a pledge daily at the meetings that they would not resume work until the thirty-five percent increase was secured and they were not to indulge in mischief, quarrelling, robbing, plundering or abusive language or cause damage to the mill owners' property, but to behave peacefully during the period of lock out.

Not the least interesting feature of this dispute was that Gandhi's chief lieutenant in organizing the strike was Anasuyabehn, the sister of Ambalal Sarabhai, Ahmedabad's leading textile manufacturer. She spent several hours in the workers' tenements every day, encouraging the dispirited, tending the sick and finding work for those who faced starvation.⁶

As the strike progressed, Gandhi watched it with some anxiety. The workers' morale after the first few days began to sag. It was impossible for most of them to exist without work and wages. Alternative employment was not practicable except for a handful. Financial assistance from outside to keep the strike going was contrary to the spirit

⁵ Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 67.

⁶ Nanda, op. cit., p. 163.

of Satyagraha. The employers offered to take those who accepted a twenty percent bonus back to work. Gandhi intensified his appeal to the labourers to remain firm, insisting upon the justice of a thirty-five percent increase.

Upon signs of weakness within the labourers' ranks Gandhi declared: "Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch any food."⁷ In response to the representation that the mill owners also had their own "pledge" (of not granting more than twenty percent increase) to keep, Gandhi agreed to settle the dispute by arbitration and to compromise on details of the settlement. The strikers went back to work when they were promised a thirty-five percent wage increase for the first day, twenty percent for the second day, and twenty-seven percent from the third day until a decision was given by the arbitrator. The arbitrator's award went in the workers' favour and the thirty-five bonus was almost won.

Duration of the actual Satyagraha movement was twenty-five days and between five and ten thousand of the labourers in the textile mills of Ahmedabad participated in it. The behaviour of the strikers remained very peaceful and the long-term effect of this campaign was the development of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association with a constitution pledging members to truth and nonviolence and a program including medical aid, maternity benefits, education, physical culture, recreation and social reform activities.⁸

⁷Gandhi, op. cit., p. 291.

⁸Bondurant, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

No-Tax Campaign in Kheda (1918)

The labour dispute at Ahmedabad had scarcely been settled when Gandhi was drawn into a conflict between the peasants of Kheda district in Bombay presidency and the local administration on the remission of the land revenue. Most of the peasants in the six hundred villages of the district owned their land and paid tax on it. But a drought had blighted the last harvest in this district. The 'revenue code' provided for a total remission of land revenue when the crops were less than twenty-five percent of the normal yield. But opinion was sharply divided on the exact damage to the crops. On-the-spot inquiries by three members of the Servants of India Society and estimates by V.J. Patel, then a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly, and Gandhi put the damage at more than three-fourths of a good year's yield. "The officials belittled these estimates emanating from 'outsiders'. The peasants' petitions were returned because they had not been sent 'through the proper channel'."⁹ Interviews with district officers brought no relief and when an influential deputation waited on the Governor of Bombay, he did not see any ground for intervention in a matter which was well within the competence of local officials.

Gujarat Sabha (a civic organization functioning in the province of Gujarat) of which Gandhi was president at this time, took a leading part in this agitation. When petitions, interviews and press statements failed to bring relief to the peasantry, the agitation passed into Gandhi's hands. He was reluctant to embarrass the Government during the war, but he was shocked by the obstinacy of the officials in

⁹Nanda, op. cit., p. 166.

refusing to face facts and to deal humanely with a hard-hit peasantry. He asked for a Committee of Inquiry to assess the damage to the crops. This demand was turned down and the commissioner issued threats that those who did not pay the land revenue in full would risk the confiscation of their lands.

After all the petitioning had failed, Gandhi advised the farmers to resort to Satyagraha. The following pledge was signed by the Satyagrahis.

"Knowing that the crops of our village are less than four annas, we requested the government to suspend the collection of revenue assessment till the ensuing year, but the government has not acceded to our prayer. Therefore, we the undersigned hereby solemnly declare that we shall not, of our own accord, pay to the government the full or the remaining revenue for the year. We shall let the government take whatever legal steps it may think fit, and gladly suffer the consequences of our non-payment. We shall rather let our lands be forfeited than that by voluntary payment we should allow our case to be considered false. Should the government, however, agree to suspend collection of the second instalment of the assessment throughout the district, such amongst us are in a position to pay will pay up the whole or the balance of the revenue that may be due. The reason why those who are able to pay still withhold payment is that if they pay up, the poorer may, in a panic, sell their chattels or incur debts to pay their dues, and thereby bring suffering upon themselves. In these circumstances we feel that for the sake of the poor, it is the duty even of those who can afford to pay to withhold payment of their assessment."¹⁰

¹⁰Gandhi, op. cit., pp. 296-297.

Gandhi declared that the war was no excuse for injustice and oppression. The Kheda peasants by resisting injustice would solve a problem of the first magnitude. That would show that 'it is impossible to govern men without their consent'.

This was the first real agrarian Satyagraha which Gandhi organized in India. The basic problem was to rid the peasantry of fear, the fear of officials, the fear of forfeiture of land and property. Gandhi and his co-workers toured the villages of Kheda to train the people in the hard school of 'Satyagraha'.

Thus, in March 1918, India witnessed Satyagraha on a fairly large scale. The papers gave it lavish publicity. Visitors and donations streamed in. But, unlike the strike, this was a slow grinding affair that lasted for months. The war was in its most anxious phase, and British officials had some excuse for severity, but the form which it took was mean. Cattle were confiscated and sold, standing crops were attached. These measures threatened the peasants with starvation. Some surrendered and paid, others were so furious that Gandhi had trouble keeping them nonviolent.¹¹

The Kheda campaign was brought to a close by an ingracious government retreat. Without making any public announcement or even informing Gandhi, who heard indirectly, the Chief Collector instructed his staff to drop their demands against the poorer peasants, and insist on payment only from those who could evidently afford it. The government repression had told severely on a district already suffering from the after-effects of drought, plague and high prices. Gandhi felt that

¹¹ Ashe, op. cit., p. 159.

the peasantry had reached the verge of exhaustion and it was prudent to prevent it from being driven to utter ruin. So when Gandhi heard of the Government's instructions, he felt justified in calling off the no-tax campaign. This may have seemed a face-saving device and a tame end to a campaign begun with high hopes. The indirect effects of the campaign were, however, significant: it awakened the peasantry of Gujarat, Gandhi's province of birth, to a consciousness of its strength and gave it a great leader in Vallabhbhai Patel; Patel gave up his practice at the Ahmedabad bar and became a trusted deputy of Gandhi in the many struggles which lay ahead.

The Vykom Temple Road Satyagraha (1924-25)

The village of Vykom is situated at the southern tip of India, in the State of Kerala. A road which passed through a district full of Brahmins, and close to a temple, was closed to Untouchables. This was a serious inconvenience inasmuch as it required Untouchables to take a long, circuitous route to reach their dwellings. In 1924 the followers of Gandhi decided that this custom must be ended and the road thrown open to all human beings alike. Gandhi, who kept in touch, was not its leader and was not in Kerala until late in the movement.

A Satyagraha camp was established early in the campaign. The movement was given a religious tone, with prayer meetings being an important part of the camp life.¹² The leaders started the struggle by taking several of the Untouchables with them along this road and into the Brahmin quarter. They were immediately beaten by the Brahmins,

¹²Bondurant, op. cit., p. 48.

and one was seriously hurt. But the young reformers offered no violence in return. Another procession marched along the road and the police arrested several of these young leaders for encouraging trespass. They were condemned to prison for different periods of time. At once, volunteers came pouring in from all parts of the country to take the place of those who were arrested. The state then forbade any further arrests, but ordered the police to prevent any more of the reformers from entering the road. Police built and manned a barricade on the roadway. Thereupon, by instructions from Gandhi, the reformers stood opposite the police barrier in an attitude of prayer. They organized themselves into shifts, taking turns in standing there for six hours at a time. They did hand spinning while not on active duty.¹³ At no time did they use violence.

This programme continued for months. Gandhi told them it must continue until the hearts of Brahmins were melted. When the rainy season came, the road, being on low ground, was flooded.

Still the volunteers continued to stand, at times up to their shoulders in water, while the police kept up the cordon in small boats.

Following Gandhi's talks (in April 1925) with state authorities, police were ordered to remove the barricades which they had manned daily. In the autumn of 1925, the Brahmins declared: "We cannot any longer resist the prayers that have been made to us, and we are ready to receive the Untouchables."¹⁴ The Brahmins opened the road to all comers and the low-caste people were allowed to walk at any time past the temple and past the Brahmin quarters.

¹³ Richard B. Gregg, The Power of Nonviolence, (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1959), p. 20.

¹⁴ Bondurant, op. cit., p. 50.

No-Tax Campaign of Bardoli (1928)

In 1928 Bardoli launched the no-tax campaign which constitutes a landmark in the history of Satyagraha. Bardoli was a taluka (sub-district) in Surat district, Bombay presidency. Agrarian discontent was brewing in several provinces, but it was in Bardoli that it came to a head. A periodical assessment was due in 1928, and the task was entrusted to a deputy collector of Surat, who made a survey and recommended a thirty percent increase. The premises of the deputy collector's report were questioned by the Settlement Commissioner, but the Government of Bombay sanctioned a twenty-two percent increase in land revenue. The peasants of Bardoli lodged a protest through their representatives in Bombay Legislative Council. Failing to get redress through petitions, they approached Vallabhbhai Patel to take up their cause. Patel studied the facts and told Gandhi that the peasants had a just grievance. Gandhi gave his blessing to the struggle.

Patel organized the taluka by setting up about twenty camps in convenient centres placed in charge of two hundred and fifty volunteers. On February 12, 1928, a representative conference resolved that the rate of enhancement was unjust; that the rate had been established without full and appropriate investigation; that an increase in the tax was unwarranted.¹⁵ The resolution called upon all landholders to refuse payment of revenue until the Government accepted it at the old rate or appointed an impartial tribunal to settle the whole question on the spot.

¹⁵ Mahadev Desai, The Story of Bardoli: Being A History of the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 and Its Sequel, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1929), p. 46.

Thus began an amazing and what seemed at first, an unequal struggle between the peasants of Bardoli and the Bombay Government. Vallabhbhai Patel's task was not easy. The peasants of Bardoli were considered gentle; it was said that even their dogs didn't bark at strangers.¹⁶ Among them was a fair sprinkling of well-to-do peasants, and were thus the more vulnerable to official pressure. Patel set out to educate the people of Bardoli into the technique of Satyagraha. He called upon them to be prepared for utter ruin in the fight against the Government. Their response was fine. Men, women and children attended the meetings called by Patel, and took a pledge to remain nonviolent, to suffer to the utmost, and cheerfully lose everything they possessed. "A new spirit pervaded the whole taluk which was almost converted into a military camp, where fighting, sacrifices, and defiance were on the lips of everyone."¹⁷

The Government tried to break the peasant's resistance. It offered the concessions to those who would pay up; it tried to wean the richer or the weaker peasants; it attached the property on a large scale and sold for a song to outsiders, as no local buyers came forward. They attached about fourteen hundred acres of land and sold it by auction. The Government drove families off their farms, grabbed the pots and pans in the kitchens, confiscated cattle and horses. "At the rate the for-
fieters are being served," Gandhi wrote, "practically the whole of the country of Bardoli should soon be in the Government's possession, and they can pay themselves a thousand times over for their precious assessments."¹⁸

¹⁶Narhari Parikhi, Sarder Vallabhbhai Patel, Vol. I, p. 313.

¹⁷R.C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. III, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963), pp. 206-207.

¹⁸Quoted in Ashe, op. cit., p. 275.

Everything hinged on Vallabhbhai's ability to keep eighty-eight thousand peasants in line, neither giving up nor resorting to violence. He managed it. Week after week, in the face of mass arrests, they stood firm. He vetoed every proposal for violence, such as planting spikes in the road to puncture the tyres of officials' cars, and violence did not occur. When the authorities tried to strip villages of all movable property, he told the peasants to dismantle their carts and hide the parts in different places.

The whole of India sympathised with the struggle, and looked with admiration on the heroes of Bardoli. Women, no less than men, took part in the struggle. Several members of the Legislature resigned as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government. On an announcement that the land of Bardoli would be sold in its entirety to new occupants, Vallabhbhai Patel wrote to the Viceroy for intervention. On June 12 Indians observed 'Bardoli Day' with a hartal. On August 2, anticipating Vallabhbhai Patel's arrest, Gandhi moved to Bardoli himself. Four days later the Government retreated.

An Enquiry Committee was appointed, thus fulfilling the initial single demand of the Satyagraha. The Committee investigated conditions in Bardoli from November 1928 to March 1929. Representatives of the villagers were freely heard. Forfeited lands were restored to their original owners; all Satyagrahis taken prisoner were released; subordinate officials who had resigned during the movement were reinstated. The Enquiry Committee finally recommended an enhancement not to exceed six and one-quarter percent. In the final assessment settlement, factors which the Committee had declared itself incompetent to

rule were taken into consideration at the insistence of the peasants with the result that virtually no enhancement of revenue was assessed in Bardoli.¹⁹ Gandhi had proved his point. The thing could be done. Bardoli became a sign and a symbol of hope and strength and victory to the Indian peasant.

(b) Satyagraha in the political field:

Satyagraha in South Africa* (1906-1914)

In 1888 Gandhi proceeded to England and qualified himself for the Bar. When Gandhi returned from England in the year 1891, he began to practise in the Courts, but was a complete failure as a lawyer both in Rajkot and Bombay.

Another new factor had begun to work against him. Gandhi's brother, Laxmidas, had served the ruler of Porbandar as a secretary and general adviser. Laxmidas was charged with misusing his late position in Porbandar. The matter went to the British agent. Gandhi had met this agent briefly in London, and Laxmidas persuaded him, very much against his will, to intercede. It was his first attempt to deal with a British official. He soon found that the man who had been sociable when on leave in England was cold and brusque when on duty in India. Gandhi refused to be silenced even by the broadest hints, and went on talking till a servant dragged him out of the office. "This

¹⁹ Bondurant, op. cit., p. 61.

* The account of Gandhi in South Africa is mainly based on Louis Fischer's book, Gandhi, His Life and Message for the World, (London: Jonathan Cape), and M.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, translated from Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai, (Madras: Ganesan, 1948).

shock," says Gandhi in his autobiography, "changed the course of my life."²⁰ The affair left him with a rooted aversion to the exploitation of private contacts.

Even though Gandhi's father had been the premier of Porbandar, he saw no future in state politics. Corruption and political intrigues, which seemed to be the order of the day, sickened him. Anxious to escape from this situation Gandhi accepted the offer of a firm of Porbandar Muslims to act as their lawyer in South Africa for a year, and left for South Africa in April 1893. Once, while going to Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, he entered a First Class compartment in the train. He was asked by the Railway officials to go to the Van compartment. As he refused he was forcibly thrown out with his luggage and had to sit the whole night in the waiting room. Years later, when asked about "the most creative experience of his life," Gandhi referred to this incident.²¹

There was nothing unusual in the humiliating treatment meted out to Gandhi. For, the two hundred thousand Indians who lived in South Africa in 1893 were subjected to all kinds of insults and indignities, and were described in the Statute books as "semi-barbarous asiatics". When the South African Government introduced a bill in 1894 to deprive the Indians of their right to elect members to the Natal Legislative Assembly, Gandhi organized a campaign against it. Though the Bill was passed, the campaign had given an immense impetus to Indian unity and morale.

²⁰Gandhi, op. cit., p. 110.

²¹Majumdar, op. cit., p. 5.

The Europeans feared that South Africa was being flooded with Indian immigration. In 1906 the Transvaal Government drafted an Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance laying down conditions as a check on further immigration. Gandhi found that a new measure had been devised to make the registration of Indians as irksome and humiliating a process as possible. It decreed that all Transvaal Indians, of both sexes and all ages from eight upwards, should report to the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate. When applying, they would have to give a number of personal details. The Registrar would record these, note any distinguishing physical marks, and collect a full set of finger prints. Any Indian who failed to report before a certain date would forfeit his right of residence, and become subject to fine, imprisonment or deportation. This penalty applied to minors as well as adults. After the registration, any Indian unable to produce his certificate at a policeman's order would be liable to a fine or jail. The police could ask for it anywhere, at any time, without warning and without giving any reason, and enter private houses to do so. Further, it would be asked for whenever an Indian had any business with a government department, even when getting a bicycle licence.

A peculiarly shocking feature was the taking of finger prints. In 1906 a full set could not be demanded from anyone but a criminal. Gandhi verified the law on this point, and then summoned a meeting of prominent Indian friends. He told them that the Government's aim was to establish the principle that Indians were second-class people, living in the Transvaal on sufferance and not by right. If the Ordinance passed, measures of the same type would follow in the rest of South Africa. The end would be slavery or expulsion.

His friends agreed. A mass protest meeting was called on September 11, 1906. With the aid of interpreters, Gandhi explained the Ordinance. Then a resolution was moved under his sponsorship, declaring that Indians should refuse to obey the Ordinance, and be ready to suffer the penalties. They also took an oath that they would stand by their resolution and never submit.

In spite of the unanimous and vehement opposition of the Indian community, the Asiatic Registration Bill was carried by the Transvaal Legislature almost in toto. It was announced that the new law would take effect from July 1, 1907. The Indians had failed to make themselves heard. The time had come for Gandhi to fulfill the pledge of resistance to this unjust law. He formed a Passive Resistance Association to conduct his campaign.

A mass campaign of non-compliance, without violence, was a political novelty. Gandhi had to invent a name for the movement. After trying 'passive resistance' he decided that a new one was needed. He offered a book prize in 'Indian Opinion', a daily paper, for the best suggestion. Modifying a term proposed by his cousin, he arrived at "Satyagraha". A person practising the method would be a Satyagrahi.

The Government opened permit offices in the principal towns and called upon all Indian residents in Transvaal to register by July 31, 1907. The Satyagraha Association advised the Indian community to boycott the permit offices. Gandhi planned the picketing of the permit offices and recruited volunteers. He forbade volunteers to be violent or even discourteous towards those who insisted on registering themselves. And they surrendered themselves cheerfully if the police wished

to arrest them. The Government extended the date of registration but by November 30, 1907, only five hundred and eleven Indians had taken out the Registration Certificates.

Later the scope of the Satyagraha campaign was extended to fight against two other disabilities newly imposed - one prohibiting the entry of the Indians into Transvaal and another declaring all Indian marriages to be illegal. Women joined Satyagraha and a large number, including both Gandhi and his wife, was sent to prison. About six thousand Indians, miners in New Castle, went on a sympathetic strike, and would not yield even though they were driven from their lodgings and had to live in the open with their women and children. Gandhi put himself at their head, and on October 28, 1913, marched with more than two thousand men to the border of the Transvaal to offer Satyagraha. Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. The strikers were also arrested and taken back to New Castle. There were strikes and Satyagrahas by women in other places in sympathy with the New Castle miners. The Government resorted to firing which resulted in a number of casualties.

The grim struggle was being watched with sympathy and admiration in India, and even the Viceroy, Lord Harding, entered a vigorous protest on behalf of the Indians. Ultimately the South African Government realized that they could not "put twenty thousand Indians in jail", and arrived at a settlement with Gandhi by removing some of the glaring indignities and inequities suffered by the Indians in South Africa. The Satyagraha campaign, which had commenced in September, 1906, came to an end with the passing of the Indian Relief Act of 1914. Gandhi returned to India in 1915.

Nation-Wide Satyagraha Against the Rowlatt Bills (1919)

This campaign was the first nation-wide Satyagraha movement to be launched in India. As an outcome of the recommendations made by the Sedition Committee presided over by Sir Sidney Rowlatt in 1918, legislation was drafted to strengthen the hand of the government in the control of crime, including sedition. One of the bills provided for trials without right of appeal by special courts, for demanding 'security' from persons likely to commit offences, and for arrests on mere suspicion. The other bill was intended to introduce permanent changes in the ordinary criminal law and to make even the possession of a seditious document punishable with two years' imprisonment.

Before the Rowlatt Bills were passed into law, Gandhi had made it clear to the Viceroy that he would have no hesitation in deciding to offer Satyagraha if the Bills, to give effect to the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee, were passed into law. In spite of his earnest pleading with the Viceroy, one of the two Bills was passed on March 18, 1919.

In the meantime, Gandhi had called a small conference attended by about twenty prominent congressmen. The Satyagraha pledge read as follows:

"Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. 1 of 1919 and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. II of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of

these bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee, to be hereafter appointed, may think fit, and we further affirm that in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property."²²

A body called Satyagraha Sabha was established with Gandhi as its President, and with headquarters in Bombay. Bulletins were issued, public meetings were held and more people signed the Satyagraha pledge. Gandhi also proposed that the country should observe a general hartal - all the people should suspend business for a day, and observe it as one of fasting and prayer as a fitting preliminary to Satyagraha which is a process of self-purification.²³ The date of the hartal was fixed on March 30, 1919, but was subsequently changed to April 6.

Gandhi's appeal for hartal met with a wonderful response all over India. In Bombay, in addition to the cessation of business a beginning was made with civil resistance by selling certain books, including Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (self-rule for India) and *Survodya* (universal good), both of which had been banned as seditious by the British Indian Government.

The campaign began in Delhi, owing to a misunderstanding, on March 30 instead of April 6. Police checked the procession by opening fire which caused many casualties. The mob retaliated. Tension was also mounting in Punjab where the local leaders felt that Gandhi's presence would assist in maintaining peace, but the Government did not

²²D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, (Bombay: The Publications Division, 1951), p. 293.

²³Mohandas K. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings of Gandhi, (Madras: G.A. Natesan and Company), p. 249.

let Gandhi reach Punjab. While he was on his way to Delhi he was taken out of his compartment at a small station and put in another train bound for Bombay, where he was released. But the rumours of Gandhi's arrest had agitated the people and the riots broke out all over.

Though Gandhi had never visited Punjab, his name was already something to conjure with in that province. His arrest near Delhi had agitated the people. On April 10, at Amritsar, following the arrest of two local leaders, a mob ran amuck, burned down the town hall and the post office, cut telegraph wires and injured a few Europeans, including two women.²⁴

Disturbances had also broken out at Ahmedabad. The mill-hands were infuriated at the rumoured arrest, struck work and committed acts of incendiarism and violence, and a sergent was killed. According to Hunter Committee's Report, "two officials were killed, among the rioters twenty-eight are known to have been killed and one hundred and twenty-three wounded. Telegraph wires were cut at eight places in Ahmedabad. The value of the property destroyed by the rioters at Ahmedabad was approximately nine and a half lakhs of rupees."²⁵

In Gujranwala, on April 14, a big crowd surrounded a train, stoned it, and burnt two railway bridges. The crowd then set fire to the telegraph office, post office, railway station, Dak Bungalow, the office of the Collector, a railway shed, a church and a school.²⁶

²⁴Nanda, op. cit., p. 175.

²⁵Majumdar, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁶Pittabhi Sitaramaya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I, p. 164.

In Kasur also the violence of the crowd took a very serious turn. The crowd got entirely out of control on April 12, burnt the main post office, the magistrate's office and a small oil shed, did considerable damage to the railway station signal and telegraph wires, and did other acts of rowdyism. They also attacked a train and beat two European soldiers to death.²⁷

It was this incidence of violence which made Gandhi realize his "Himslyan Miscalculation".²⁸ He tried to visit these places and pacify them. But as he saw the actual state of things and received the reports, he suddenly came to feel that he had committed a great error in calling upon the people to launch a campaign of civil disobedience. The foremost reason for the failure of the campaign to remain nonviolent lay in the inadequate preparation of those who participated, especially those on the periphery of the campaign. The code of discipline, which was understood and adhered to by some of the central figures in the campaign, was not sufficiently ingrained in enough of the volunteers to assure strict adherence to Satyagraha. Leadership was not extensive enough to control a suddenly activated mass following. As Gandhi was to point out to the Hunter Committee, which investigated the disturbance, the masses of India had formerly remained inert. Indian leaders had never before attracted them into political action. They were completely undisciplined. The Rowlatt movement tapped, for the first time, resources which had long lain dormant. Gandhi also felt that a Satyagrahi must scrupulously obey all laws; for only then does the right accrue to him of civil dis-

²⁷Ibid., p. 163.

²⁸Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments With Truth, op. cit., p. 469.

obedience of certain laws in well defined circumstances. No one had a right to adopt Satyagraha before he had thoroughly qualified himself for it, and Gandhi felt that his error lay in his failure to observe this necessary limitation.²⁹

As a result of these reflections, Gandhi suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement and decided not to restart it on a mass scale without first creating a band of well-tries, pure-hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of Satyagraha, and could explain them to the people. Accordingly, he went to Bombay and raised a corps of Satyagrahi volunteers through the Satyagraha Sabha. But Gandhi found that people took little interest in the peaceful side of Satyagraha. The number of volunteers dwindled and even those who remained did not take regular training.

Non Violent Non Co-operation
Campaign of 1921

In December 1919, King George I issued a proclamation granting his assent to the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and an amnesty to the political prisoners. The reforms set up a new constitution on a basis described as Dyarchy, the rule of two, namely Britain and India. An All-India assembly with an elected majority would sit in Delhi, the capital of India. But real sovereignty would remain with the Viceroy and his Council. In the provinces, most of the Government departments would be entrusted to Indian Ministers, responsible to Councils elected on a propertied franchise. The voters, however, would amount to only

²⁹Ibid., p. 470.

2.8 percent of the population. Also, the British governors would retain a veto, and control finance and the police. The King called upon officials and the people to co-operate. Immediately afterwards, at the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Amritsar, Gandhi cast his influence in favour of accepting the constitutional reforms; he appealed to the country to settle down quietly to work so as to make the new constitution a success.

But what Gandhi believed to be the spirit of the Royal Proclamation of December 1919 did not filter down to the British Administration in India. "In vain did he appeal to the central Government for a change of heart."³⁰ Gandhi was disturbed when appeals of twenty martial-law prisoners from Punjab against sentences of death were turned down. He noted with surprise that the officers responsible for misrule in Punjab had not been recalled.

Reluctantly and almost painfully, Gandhi was driven to the conviction that the system of government, which he had been trying to mend, needed to be ended. The 'Khilaft Betrayal' (to which I will return later) had also contributed to this conversion. Following the death of leading nationalists Gopal K. Gokhale in 1915 and B.G. Tilak in August 1920, Gandhi became the central figure in Indian nationalism. So in a special session in Calcutta in September 1920, Congress adopted Gandhi's program of non co-operation and later in the annual session in Nagpur, the new program was finally adopted with practical unanimity. The creed of the Congress was changed from the previous proclamation of the aim of colonial self-government within the Empire, to be attained

³⁰Nanda, op. cit., p. 179.

by constitutional means to the new aim of the attainment of Swaraj (self-rule) by peaceful and legitimate means. In Nehru's words, this special session of Calcutta began the Gandhi era in Congress.³¹

The method of struggle was to be a perfectly peaceful one, nonviolent as it was called, and its basis was a refusal to help the government in its administration and exploitation of India. To begin with, there were to be a number of boycotts - of titles given by the foreign government, of official functions and the like, of law courts by both lawyers and litigants, of official schools and colleges and of the new councils under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Later the boycotts were to extend to the civil and military services and the payment of taxes.

A great sweep forward of the mass movement followed the adoption by the Congress of the new program of struggle against the government for the speedy realization of Swaraj (self-rule). Gandhi freely declared as a firm and certain prophecy the rash promise that Swaraj would be achieved within twelve months,³² that is - for the date was definite - by December 1921. He even went so far as to declare, at a conference in September 1921, that he was so sure of getting Swaraj before the end of the year that he could not conceive himself as living beyond December 31, without having won Swaraj.

The object of boycotting the councils was to bring about a complete deadlock in administration. Gandhi hoped that there would be a wholesale abstention of voters from voting. From this point of view

³¹Jawaharal Nehru, Towards Freedom, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), p. 66.

³²R. Palme Dutt, India To-day, (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1940), p. 323.

the movement for boycotting the councils was a complete failure. All the Congress candidates had withdrawn from the contest in obedience to the mandate of the Calcutta Congress, and all the seats were filled up by non-Congressmen. Though the Congress was undeniably strong and could easily command majority of votes in almost all Hindu constituencies, it was not strong enough to prevent at least three-quarters of the total number of voters from casting their votes and thereby render the election void or ineffectual, as they hoped.³³

The boycott of the legal profession was heralded by the magnificent self-sacrifice of Pandit Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, both leaders of the Bar and enjoying a princely income. They gave up their practice, and their example was followed by a large number of other lawyers. But the boycott was more spectacular than effective, for the number of boycotting lawyers, though perhaps exceeding a thousand to start with, but gradually dwindling as time passed, was not large enough in proportion to their total strength, and hence could not make any impression upon, far less cripple, the work of the British law-courts.

On the whole, the movement for the boycott of schools and colleges proved a failure. Though quite a large number of students gave up their studies, the movement never gained sufficient strength, and failed to create any lasting impression or produce any serious effect on the existing institutions. Many of the students who came out rejoined their old institutions, some resumed their studies in newly started national schools and colleges. Only a small band remained steadfast to their resolve, at least for many years to come.

³³Majumdar, op. cit., p. 107.

The boycott of titles and honours as well as of Government offices was a hopeless failure. The number of persons who renounced honours and titles was very small compared to the total number. These titles and honours henceforth ceased to be distinctions in the estimation of the people at large, and widely came to be regarded as badges of slavery. As regards the resignation of Government jobs, the response was insignificant and negligible.

The nonco-operation movement did not, so far, arouse any great excitement or lead to any such open conflict between the Government and the people as many anticipated. The visit of the Prince of Wales to India in November, 1921, however, offered an opportunity.

It was proposed that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales would formally inaugurate the new legislatures in India, both central and local, constituted under the Reforms Scheme of 1919. The All India Congress Committee, meeting at Bombay on July 28, 1921, decided to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales. It passed a resolution to the effect, "that it is the duty of everyone to refrain from participating in or assisting any welcome to His Royal Highness or any functions organized officially or otherwise in connection with his visit."³⁴

On November 17, 1921, when the Prince landed in Bombay, the non co-operators abstained from the official ceremony. In accordance with the resolution of the working committee of the Congress to observe strike on that day all over India, a huge public meeting was held at the opposite end of the town. During the morning the tramcars were running and the mills were working. Within a few hours, however, all

³⁴Ibid., pp. 125-126.

this stopped, and swelling crowds rushed into the streets. They declared strike and joined the boycott meeting at the beach which was addressed by Gandhi, and a huge bonfire was made of a pile of foreign cloth. The mill-hands came out and began hooliganism of all kinds. Other people joined them and a swelling mob was molesting the peaceful passengers in the tramcars and held up the traffic. Their special wrath fell upon those who had joined or gone to witness the royal procession. The mob forcibly removed their foreign caps and head dresses, pelted Europeans, and burnt tramcars. A parsi temple was set fire too, and immense damage was done to shops. The casualties were high. According to official report fifty-three persons were killed and about four hundred were wounded.³⁵

Gandhi was deeply mortified at the incidents of Bombay. He denounced the rioters and vowed to abstain from food until the violence was stopped. He remarked: "with nonviolence on our lips we have terrorised those who happened to differ from us. The Swaraj that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils."³⁶

The Government issued a notification declaring the Congress and Khilafat volunteer organization as unlawful. A week later proclamations were issued suppressing all public assemblies and processions for three months in Calcutta and certain other important towns. It is thus obvious that the Government of India was determined to suppress by force the movement to boycott the Prince of Wales. Thus was kindled the flame which lay in embers nearly throughout the year. At last, after eleven months of inactivity, comparatively speaking,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

³⁶ Nanda, op. cit., p. 234.

the Government declared open war against the non co-operators, and the whole of India watched with a thrill the results of the first encounter between the armed might of the powerful British Government and the nonviolent non co-operation or Passive Resistance.

The general opinion was in favour of an immediate reply to the official challenge. The Bengal Provincial Committee unanimously decided to start civil disobedience and vested all its powers in C.R. Das. Das issued a stirring appeal for volunteers who would thus defy the official ban and take all the consequences. He decided to begin by sending out batches of five volunteers who would proceed quietly to sell khadi cloth. The number of volunteers increased rapidly beyond all expectation or calculation, and everyone of them was eager to court arrest. Within a few days the two big prisons in Calcutta were filled with political prisoners. The British jail had lost its terror and imprisonment became a badge of distinction.

The scene of Bengal was repeated in other provinces. People came out in open defiance of Government orders and courted arrest. A wave of unprecedented enthusiasm swept over the country and within a month twenty-five thousand people were put in prison.

The annual session of the Congress was held in December 1921, at Ahmadabad. As nearly forty thousand Congress workers were in jail, the main resolution adopted by the Congress claimed that by reason of the adoption of nonviolent non co-operation, "the country is rapidly progressing towards Swaraj," and it further advised all Congress workers and others to organize individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of nonviolence.³⁷

³⁷ Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

On February 1, 1922, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy communicating the decision of Bardoli, a small tehsil in the Surat district in the Bombay presidency, having a population of about eighty-seven thousand to embark on mass civil disobedience. In this historic letter, Gandhi made a final appeal to the Viceroy to revise his policy, set free all the prisoners convicted for nonviolent activities, to free the press from all administrative control and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all nonviolent activities undertaken for the redress of Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs or Swaraj. If the Government made the necessary declaration within seven days, Gandhi wrote in the concluding part of the letter, he would be prepared to advise postponement of civil disobedience.³⁸ The peace offer was rejected by the Government.

The attention of the whole of India was centered on Bardoli. Gandhi himself went there to lead the campaign. He addressed a big conference of local people emphasizing all the preliminary requisites of the coming struggle. The conference adopted a resolution to begin a mass civil disobedience under the guidance of Gandhi and Patel.

No Indian could foresee that the great battle for freedom begun with such trumpet and fanfare, would be irretrievably lost before it was begun. In a small village called Chauri Chaura, far away in U.P., the police opened fire on a procession, but when their ammunition was exhausted, and they shut themselves up inside a building, the excited mob set fire to it, and as the members of the police force were thus forced to come out, they were all, twenty-five in number, hacked to death, and their bodies were thrown into the flames.

³⁸ Sitarmaya, op. cit., pp. 233-235.

There were similar violent incidents in Madras and Calcutta. This news of violence made Gandhi determine that there was no time to be lost. At a hasty meeting of the Working Committee of the National Congress at Bardoli the decision was reached: the Committee resolved that mass Civil Disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended. The whole campaign of Civil Disobedience through volunteer processions, the holding of public meetings under the ban and the like were ended. The battle was over. "The mountain had indeed borne a mouse."³⁹

In March 1922 the Government arrested Gandhi and tried him for sedition; he willingly pleaded guilty and was imprisoned until 1924. After his release the Congress ended its boycott of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, and as a result of this shift towards constitutionalism, Gandhi temporarily gave up his program of non co-operation.

Salt Satyagraha (1930-1934)

Early in 1929 Congress demanded Dominion Status by the end of the year. By the end of the year, Dominion Status had not been conceded, and henceforth Swaraj would mean complete independence. At midnight on December 31, 1929, the Congress called upon its members in the central provincial legislatures to resign their seats and authorized the All India Congress Committee to launch civil disobedience. It was clear that in its decisions to conduct civil disobedience, Congress would be guided by Gandhi.

³⁹Dutt, op. cit., p. 323.

A struggle between the Congress and the British Indian Government was now inevitable. The first step Gandhi took was to call for the celebration of 'Independence Day' on January 26, 1930. On that day thousands of people took pledge that 'it was a crime against man and God to submit to British rule', and undertook to join a campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes if the Congress launched it.

To dramatize the struggle, Gandhi suggested the inauguration of the movement with the breach of the Salt Laws. Gandhi announced that he would himself perform the first act of civil disobedience by leading a group of Satyagrahis to the sea, where Satyagrahis would, in violation of the salt monopoly, prepare salt from sea water.

Gandhi decided to lead the first band of Satyagrahis from Ahmedabad to Dandi on the sea shore. On March 12, 1930, he began the two hundred and forty-one mile march to Dandi along with his seventy-nine Satyagrahis. He urged villagers along the way to pursue constructive work, to remain nonviolent, and to participate in the civil disobedience following the initial breach of the law at Dandi.

The Satyagrahis reached Dandi on April 5. The following morning, after prayers, they proceeded to the beach where they prepared salt from sea water, thus technically breaking the Salt Law. Upon breaking the law, Gandhi declared that it was then open to anyone who would take the risk of prosecution to manufacture salt wherever he wished. The response was very enthusiastic. The Government began arrests at the mass scale. No less than sixty thousand Indians were gaoled. Most of the prominent Congress leaders, including Nehru, Rajgopalachari, Patel, and Rajendra Prasad, were arrested. Gandhi was arrested on May 5, 1930.

Meanwhile, the All Indian Congress Committee had extended the scope of civil disobedience to include the breach of forest laws, the non-payment of taxes, and the boycott of foreign cloth, banks, shipping and insurance companies. As the campaign proceeded, special ordinances designed to suppress publicity and control assembly were promulgated by the Government. The extensive campaign continued throughout the year and involved many manifestations of non co-operation and civil disobedience.

When Gandhi was released in early 1931, he began to negotiate with the British Indian Government to determine under what conditions his civil disobedience would terminate and he might attend the London Conference. Resulting from the negotiations was the Irwin-Gandhi agreement, which to Nehru's dismay Gandhi entered without consulting other nationalists.⁴⁰ The terms called for the British to release political prisoners and to end the Government salt monopoly; for Congress-led Indians to suspend civil disobedience and to be represented in the London Conference. The pact gave no assurances to Indian nationalists of early independence or dominion status. It must be evident to all, not blinded by devotion to Gandhi, that what he secured for India, could be possibly had by way of constitutional progress without the Civil Disobedience campaign involving untold miseries and sufferings. Gandhi even went so far as to forego his demand for an investigation into the allegations of police atrocities in different parts of India.

⁴⁰Nehru, op. cit., p. 192.

The Congress leaders hardly felt that they had won any victory. In the peoples' eyes, the plain fact that the Englishman had been brought to negotiate instead of giving orders outweighed any number of details. But this elation did not last long. Irwin departed, and the new Viceroy was Lord Willingdon. He made it clear that he had none of Irwin's respect for Gandhi and wanted as little as possible to do with him.⁴¹ By July the pact showed signs of crumbling because of British violations. Gandhi talked of staying away from the London Conference, and even cancelled his passage. But the affairs were patched up and he sailed to England at the end of August.

He stayed in England for twelve weeks. His performance at the Conference was summed up by Andrews as a magnificent failure.⁴² In the end he neither gained anything nor yielded anything. The new constitution provided for a Federal Council based on a jigsaw of electorates and special interests. It would be free to govern India, so long as it had no control over the armed forces or foreign policy or four-fifths of the budget, and accepted a heavy representation of Muslims and princes, plus a viceregal veto.

Gandhi arrived back in India on December 28, 1931. After his meeting with the Congress Working Committee in private, he heard what had been happening while he was at sea. While the Round Table Conference lulled suspicions, Lord Willingdon had been planning a counter attack. During December the British Indian Government had begun employing emergency powers. Minor terrorist outbreaks in

⁴¹Ashe, op. cit., p. 298.

⁴²Ibid., p. 311.

certain areas of India were answered by confiscation of property, arrests without warrant, and imprisonment without trial. The Irwin-Gandhi Pact was dead.

Gandhi made a bid to resuscitate the pact. He got an interview with Lord Willingdon and tried to impress on him that if the emergency ordinances were not withdrawn, it might be hard to prevent the resumption of civil disobedience movement. The Viceroy treated his warning as a threat, and broke off all correspondence.

On January 2, 1932, Gandhi made a public statement. The Government, he declared, had banged the door in his face. A fiery ordeal lay ahead. But India's quarrel was with measures, not men. Nonviolence must be observed in thought, word and deed. Gandhi was arrested on January 4.

Civil disobedience broke out on large scale, but in a changed spirit. This time the Government had held the initiative. The Satyagrahis were merely resisting. The cloth boycott, the tax strikes, the defiance of forest laws and salt laws, were desperately renewed. In January and February, authorities convicted thirty-two thousand people of political offences.⁴³ They treated entire districts as hostile, and forced the population to carry identity cards and submit to curfews. Congress was outlawed.

After February activity slowly waned. In March, Gandhi took his stand against the Communal Award (to which I will return later). From this point on, his war on Untouchability took precedence over other pursuits. By May 1933 mass civil disobedience had almost

⁴³ Ibid., p. 315.

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petered out. In April 1934, Gandhi called a final halt. The Government let most of its prisoners go, and allowed Congress to re-form in June with a view to contesting elections.

Fast Against Communal Award (1934)

As a result of the Round Table Conference in London in 1931, the British Government announced in March 1932 that it was drawing up its new scheme for Communal electorates. The Government was planning to pass a 'Communal Award' which was to lay down the quantum and mode of representation under the new constitution. Gandhi had argued that separate electorates would divide the Hindu Community without doing any good to the depressed classes. He recalled, what he said at the Second Round Table Conference, that he would resist with his life the grant of separate electorates to the depressed classes.

When the 'Communal Award' was published on August 17, 1932, it defined separate electorates for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans and Untouchables. Gandhi immediately wrote to the British Prime Minister that he would embark on a 'perpetual fast unto death' until the decision was revised.⁴⁴ On September 20, he would begin starving himself. The Prime Minister answered that the Award took his protest into account. It did not separate the Untouchables completely. Each of them would have two votes, one in his own special group, the other with the Hindus. Without a distinct electorate, the Prime Minister argued, such members would be dependent on the votes of Caste Hindus, and might be prevented to secure a limited number of representatives in the legislatures.

⁴⁴Nanda, op. cit., p. 345.

Gandhi wrote back that the question was one of religious principle. He objected to the whole Communal Scheme, but the Untouchable **part** was the breaking point, a classic Satyagraha issue.⁴⁵ The outcaste status would be written into the Constitution. Therefore, his fast must proceed. Ambedkar, the leader of Untouchables, condemned the fast as a stunt to recapture the lime light. Nehru suffered another of his qualms about Gandhi's conduct. As he put it in his autobiography, "I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question."⁴⁶

Gandhi, meanwhile, was busy explaining that his fast was not meant to coerce the British, but to sting Hindu conscience and inspire action. Ramsey MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, had implied in his answer that Britain would accept an alternative solution if Hindus and Untouchables could agree on it. So a Hindu Leaders' Conference met at Bombay. The leaders, who included Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, Rajgopalachari and Rajendra Prasad, were anxious for a solution. They had, however, to carry with them the leaders of the depressed classes, particularly Ambedkar, who was not only a stubborn advocate of separate electorates, but fully conscious of his pivotal position: no solution to which he did not agree was likely to commend itself to the Government.

Gandhi started his fast on September 20. As a result of the fast and the strain of the negotiations, Gandhi's strength began to ebb quickly. Ambedkar bargained hard, he was reluctant to give up separate electorates, which the Communal Award gave to his community,

⁴⁵Ashe, op. cit., p. 317.

⁴⁶Quoted in Ashe, op. cit., p. 317.

unless he received some counter-balancing advantages. Eventually, an agreement, popularly known as the Poona Pact, was reached; it doubled the representation for the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures, but revised the electoral system. Voters from the depressed classes were to hold a primary election and to choose a panel of four candidates for each seat; these four candidates were to submit for election to a joint electorate of caste Hindus and Untouchables. Reservation of seats was to continue until it was ended by mutual agreement, but the method of primary election was to lapse after ten years.

Gandhi would not, however, break his fast until the British Government set its seal of approval on the Poona Pact. Prime Minister MacDonald hurried to London from Sussex, where he was attending a funeral, and was joined by Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State, and Lord Lothian, the Chairman of the Franchise Committee. The British Cabinet accepted the Poona Pact on September 26 and Gandhi broke the fast.

(c) Satyagraha and Its Application to Hindu-Muslim Unity:

Even while Gandhi was in South Africa, he had come to realize that there was no genuine friendship or good feeling between the Hindus and Muslims of India. He was deeply aggrieved and he strongly felt the need of establishing cordial relations between the two communities. He wrote in his autobiography, "my African experiences had convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim Unity that my

Ahimsa would be put to its severest test, and that the question presented the widest field for my experiments in Ahimsa."⁴⁷

Khilafat Movement (1919)

The Pan-Islamic movement had gathered force in India, at the end of the First World War. Turkey's entry into that war as an ally of Germany against Britain put the Indian Muslims into an awkward situation. Their natural sympathy with the Sultan of Turkey as their Caliph or religious head, was in conflict with their loyalty to the British throne as Indian Subjects. The British Government fully realized the difficulty of the Indian Muslims, and in order to win their sympathy and support during the war, gave assurances of sympathetic treatment of Turkey at the end of the war. The Indian Muslims were assured that Turkey would not be deprived of rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which were predominantly Turkish in race.

But all these hopes were doomed to disappointment by the terms of the Armistice which concluded the war. Thrace was presented to Greece, and the Asiatic portions of the Turkish Empire passed under the control of England and France under the guise of Mandates. While Turkey was thus dispossessed of her homelands, her ruler, the Sultan, was deprived of all real authority even in the remaining dominions, as he was placed completely under the control of High Commission appointed by the Allied Powers, who really ruled the country in his name.

⁴⁷ Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments With Turth, op. cit., p. 441.

The Muslims of India regarded the treatment of Turkey as a great betrayal on the part of the British and other Allies, and a storm of indignation broke out among them. They decided to force Britian to change her Turkish policy and Gandhi held out before them the Sovereign remedy of Satyagraha. This led to the Caliphate or Khilafat (as the word was generally spelt) Movement in 1919.

The success of this movement was assured by the large measure of sympathy and support which the Muslims received from Gandhi. Gandhi readily agreed because he thought that such a chance of winning over the Muslims would never come in a hundred years.⁴⁸

Gandhi felt that the Muslim demand about the Khilafat was just and that he was bound to help to secure the due fulfillment of the pledge that the British Prime Minister had given to the Indian Muslims during the war. In the letter which Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy immediately after the war conference at Delhi, he particularly stressed the Khilafat question. Henceforth Gandhi missed no opportunity of pressing upon the Government of India the need of a just settlement of the Khilafat question and the release of the Ali Brothers, who had been jailed for criticising the British policy towards Turkey.

When the All India Khilafat Conference met at Delhi on November 23, 1919, Gandhi was elected its president. The Conference asked the Muslims not to join the public celebrations for victory, and hold out threats of boycott and non cooperation if the British didn't solve the problem of Turkey in a manner satisfactory to the

⁴⁸ Majumdar, op. cit., p. 60.

to the Muslims. This decision was reaffirmed by the Muslim League in Calcutta. Later on the leading Congressmen and Khilafatists assembled at Ameritsar, and it was decided to organize the Khilafat work under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. In other words, the Congress lent the full support of its power, prestige and organization to the cause of the Khilafat.

It was decided to send a deputation to the Viceroy. This deputation of the Khilafat Conference was fairly representative of Hindus and Muslims and the address which it presented to the Viceroy in January, 1920, was signed by many leading Hindu politicians. This address pointed out that the Hindus and Muslims "now happily reunited and standing shoulder to shoulder will be equally aggrieved if the just demands of the Muslims were not accepted."⁴⁹ The Viceroy expressed sympathy but added that he was helpless in this matter. The reply was regarded as disappointing and the Khilafat League arranged to send deputations to England. The Indian deputation met the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, on March 17, 1920, but without much success.

Lloyd Geogre's reply to the Khilafat deputation on March 17 deeply stirred the Khilafat sentiment in India, and March 19 was fixed as a day of national mourning - a day of fasting and prayer and hartal. In the meantime, Gandhi had issued a Manifesto on March 10, embodying his ideas on the future course of action to be pursued by the Khilafatists if their demands were not granted. In this Manifesto he ruled out the violent method of warfare, open or secret. He advocated non co-operation as the most effective remedy, when it is free

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

from all violence.⁵⁰ He sketched in his Manifesto a rough outline of the course of non co-operation movement, in the following words: "We may therefore begin at the top as well as the bottom. Those who are holding offices of honour or employment ought to give them up. Those who belong to the menial services under Government should do likewise."⁵¹

Thus Gandhi was fully prepared to fight the British, with his newly forged weapon, to the bitterest end over the Khilafat issue. But before long other issues were joined to the Khilafat - like Swaraj and the redress of Punjab wrongs - and the non co-operation movement, originally intended for undoing the wrongs inflicted upon the Khilafat, merged itself into a general political struggle, far outstripping its original limitation. The way this nonviolent non co-operation movement came to an immature end has already been discussed in another section of this chapter (above pp. 46-54).

Gandhi's attitude towards the Khilafat question was criticized even by his friends; he justified himself in the name of Hindu-Muslim unity:

The test of friendship is true assistance in adversity, and whatever we are, Hindus, Parsees, Christians or Jews, if we wish to live as one nation, surely, the interests of any of us must be the interests of all... We talk of the Hindu-Muslim unity. It would be an empty phrase if the Hindus hold aloof from the Mohammedans when their vital interests are at stake.⁵²

But this Hindu-Muslim unity over the Khilafat movement was never based on any firm foundation. To believe, as Gandhi did, that any effort to help the Muslims on this occasion would forever secure

⁵¹Ibid., p. 191.

⁵²Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

the Hindu-Muslim unity, only betrays a lack of full knowledge regarding the growth of Muslim Nationalism. In any case, this attempt of Gandhi to support the Khilafat movement as a means to bind the Hindus and Muslims into lasting bonds of brotherhood failed completely. "Once the temporary Hindu-Muslim friendship born out of Khilafat movement ended, there were numerous Hindu-Muslim riots in various places."⁵³

Gandhi's Fast For Hindu-Muslim Unity (1924)

The revival of the old communal feelings, after the halt of the Khilafat movement, resulted in discords over petty issues such as music before mosque, cutting down the branches of pipal trees, held sacred by the Hindus, killing of cows in public places during Id ceremony.

One of the worst communal riots broke out in Calcutta in May, 1923. It arose out of an Arya-Samajist procession playing music while passing before a mosque. The Arya-Samajists contended that they were merely following a regular practice which was never objected to before; while Muslims asserted that the music disturbed their religious prayer. So fighting commenced and continued for several days in course of which there were many casualties on both sides.

Riots broke out in 1923-1924 in Delhi, in Gulbarga, in Kohat and Lakhnau. Gandhi's heart was naturally filled with sadness and sorrow when he found that the citadel of Hindu-Muslim unity which he had built and regarded as based on a strong and stable foundation,

⁵³S.K. Majumdar, Jinnah and Gandhi, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mudhopadhyay, 1966), p. 61.

tumbled down like a house of cards. He completely broke down at the news of the tragedies of Gulbarga and Kohat. He decided to do penance in the shape of fast for twenty-one days. While staying at the house of one of his Muslim friends at Delhi, he commenced the fast on September 17, 1924.

The news was received with great concern all over the country. Prominent Hindus and Muslims attended a conference convened at Delhi to devise ways and means to restore communal amity and thereby save the life of the Mahatma. A number of resolutions were passed. One of them clearly defined the rights and obligations of the two communities in respect of those items like cow slaughter, music before mosque, etc., which had hitherto been the bone of contention and the immediate causes of the communal riots, as well as the more general questions like conversion or reconversion which had created bad blood between the two communities. In spite of the request of the conference that Gandhi break his fast, Gandhi continued it for the full twenty-one days, till October 8, 1924.⁵⁴ On October 8, when he broke his fast, there were serious communal riots at Allahabad, Kanchrapara near Calcutta, and at Sagar and Jubbulpore in C.P.

The Last Phase (1947)

What Gandhi had feared had come to pass. India was to be divided, but partition was not to be imposed; it had been accepted by Jawaharlal Nehru, Patel and a majority of the members of the Congress Working Committee. At the meeting of the All India Congress Committee

⁵⁴I.A.R., 1924, Vol. II, pp. 147-160.

which debated the Mountbatten Plan of Partition, Gandhi made no secret of his misgivings, but threw his weight in favour of its acceptance. Partition having become a fait accompli, Gandhi's efforts were henceforth directed to mitigating its risks.

He started wandering from one province to another in a vain attempt to stem the tide of violence. While his work was unfinished in one province, there was an outbreak in the other. He resorted to fasts, but they would have only a temporary effect. The communal tensions were at their pitch. In the nine months between August 1947 and the spring of the following year, between fourteen and sixteen million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were forced to leave their homes and flee to safety from blood-crazed mobs. In the same period over six hundred thousand Hindus and Muslims were killed.⁵⁵

On January 13, 1948, Gandhi began a fast, his last fast. The fast was not to be broken until Delhi became peaceful. The town was ostensibly quiet; thanks to the stern measures taken by the Government, the killings had stopped. On January 18, 1948, representatives of various communities and parties in Delhi signed a pledge in Gandhi's presence that they would guarantee peace in Delhi. Before breaking the fast, Gandhi told them that if they did not honour the pledge he would fast unto death.

On January 30, 1948, Gandhi was murdered by one of his own countrymen, an adherent of his own faith. Nathu Ram Godse was a member of the Hindu Mahasabha, an organization of fervid patriots, and he thought that, while his own compatriots were being systematically

⁵⁵ Leonard Mosley, The Last Days of British Raj, (London: Taylor Garnett Evans and Company Limited, 1961), p. 243.

persecuted in Pakistan, the Muslims in India were being pampered. The great traitor, he felt, was Gandhi.⁵⁶ It was a strange irony that the apostle of nonviolence should have met a violent end. The dark forces of hate seemed to have won.

⁵⁶G.D. Khosla, The Murder of Mahatma, (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1963), pp. 269-270.

Chapter III

AN EVALUATION

In this chapter I will attempt to evaluate Gandhi's philosophy as it actually stood in practice. My conclusion will be that: In spite of Gandhi's assertions to the contrary, there was an element of coerciveness in the Satyagrahic techniques that he employed for the attainment of his ends.

I shall also contend that though Satyagrahic actions could comparatively remain nonviolent in the social spheres, in the political arena, they invariably led to violence.

It shall also be argued in this chapter that though Gandhi wanted his followers to practice nonviolence as a creed and not as an expediency, most of his followers and co-workers could never adopt it as a matter of principle. Even Gandhi's own actions and writings give one an ambivalent feeling on this issue. An analysis of his activities would betray a tendency on Gandhi's part to equate expediency with principle.

An attempt will also be made to show that Gandhi's religious ideology, his religious practices and his attempt to mix religion with politics proved, to some extent, hindrances to his objective of attaining Hindu-Muslim unity.

The crucial point involved here is whether Satyagraha, like war, is also a coercive force. Coercion has been defined as "the use of either physical or intangible force to compel action contrary to

the will or reasoned judgment of the individual or group subjected to such force." Gandhi himself time and again refused to see an element of coercion in nonviolent direct action. But despite the protestations of Gandhi and his followers that Satyagraha is always persuasive and never coercive, the method does contain a positive element of coercion.

Satyagraha allows for several stages of winning over an opponent. The first stage is characterized by persuasion through reason. But if persuasion through reason or suffering does not succeed, the Satyagrahi may resort to nonviolent coercion characterized by such tools as non co-operation and civil disobedience.

Non co-operation, boycott, strike - all of these tools which may be used in Satyagraha involve an element of compulsion which may effect a change on the part of an opponent which initially was contrary to his will, and he may suffer from the indirect results of these actions.¹

Satyagraha does not avoid all forms of nonviolent coercion. Resisters do not take all the suffering on themselves. They also impose some on others. The method tries to avoid associated feelings of hatred or pride, but it nevertheless includes coercive elements. Jawaharlal Nehru was even willing to say, "often enough moral force is a far more terrible coercive factor than physical violence." Speaking of the coercion involved in Gandhi's method, he wrote, "Whatever the motives of conversion behind it, in practice it has been a powerful weapon of compulsion as well, though that compulsion is exercised in the most civilized and least objectionable manner."²

¹Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 8.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, (London: The Bodley Head, 1936), pp. 539-540.

The essential difference between persuasion and coercion is found in the reason that impels the opponent to act as the user of the method wants him to act. If the opponent acts favourably because he has been convinced and has changed his position with respect to the central point at issue, he has been persuaded. On the other hand, an opponent has been coerced if he continues to hold a contrary conviction, but nevertheless acts favourably only because he wishes to avoid some threat that is not inherently a part of the central issue.

As a result of Gandhi's Satyagraha in South Africa, the Indian Relief Bill was passed, after parleys between Gandhi and General Smuts, the Transvaal Colonial Secretary. Truth-force had triumphed. That was the judgment of most vocal Indians. But had it?

In 1931 the two protagonists met again. Recalling their conflict, Smuts observed: "I did not give you such a bad time as you gave me." "I did not know that," Gandhi replied.³ The remark is illuminating. Gandhi was so utterly wedded to his concepts as not to recognize that there had been a real fight involving the hurting and humbling of an enemy. He persisted in thinking that the end was a conversion. Here he was wrong. The prevailing white attitudes had not altered. Smuts indeed had acquired a soldierly respect for him which was to grow into admiration. But even Smuts, on Gandhi's departure from South Africa, wrote to a private correspondent: "The saint has left our shores: I hope for ever."⁴

³Geoffrey Ashe, Gandhi, (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1968), p. 125.

⁴Ibid., p. 125.

It is misleading to call Satyagraha a pure and simple process of conversion as Gandhi and some of his followers would have it. There is definitely an element of compulsion in it. As a matter of fact, Gandhi himself once used the very word 'compulsion' in connection with his ideology. Criticising Lord Chelmsford's speech in 1920 which upheld the Punjab Martial Law and justified, subtly, the Jallianwala Bag Massacre, Gandhi said in a statement to the press:

The remarks on the Punjab mean a flat refusal to grant redress. He would have us to concentrate on the problem of the immediate future! The immediate future is to compel repentance on the part of the Government on the Punjab matter.⁵

At first sight the strikes, the boycott or other organized movements of non co-operation do not appear to be coercive in nature, since they involve merely an abstention from action on the part of the group offering the resistance. Actually, they are coercive, however, because of the absolute necessity for inter-group co-operation in the maintenance of our modern social, economic, and political systems. Under modern conditions the group against whom the resistance is directed must have the co-operation of the resisting group in order to continue to survive. When that co-operation is denied, the old dominant group is forced to make concessions, even against its will, to the former subordinate group in order to regain the help that they have refused to render under the old conditions.⁶

⁵Krishnalal Shridharni, War Without Violence: A Study of Gandhi's Method and Its Accomplishments, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p. 293.

⁶Clarence Marsh Case, Non-Violent Coercion, (New York: Century, 1923), p. 330.

In any particular campaign the type of coercion used may become more seriously destructive than is necessary. Reducing a merchant's profit by boycott is one thing, driving him to bankruptcy is another thing. Believers in nonviolent action are likely to see such a difference as important when coercion is directed towards themselves. They have, for example, quite properly protested against driving share-croppers off the farms, and thereby depriving them of a livelihood, simply because of their civil rights activity. Resisters have been ready to accept reasonable jail sentences. At the same time they might protest unusual or excessive punishment. The same distinction ought to be applied to their own activities.

Illustrations of coercion that might well have been considered unjustifiably excessive were Gandhi's fasts unto death. The Indian Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, went so far as to say, "I regard the use of the fast for the political purposes as a form of political blackmail for which there can be no moral justification."⁷ Specially when a fast is undertaken to continue indefinitely until specified demands are met, this forces the opponent either to comply or to accept the consequences of the death of as prominent and popular a leader as Gandhi. It is difficult to see how this degree of unrelated pressure retains the disarming, reconciling quality that is claimed as one of the superior features of nonviolent resistance. It is interesting to note that Gandhi believed that the fast of the Irish leader, Macsweeny, when he was imprisoned in Dublin, was an act of violence, yet he himself resorted to fasting a number of times to obtain concessions either from

⁷K.G. Mashruwala in preface to R.R. Diwakar, Satyagraha: Its Technique and History, (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1946), p. XIV.

the British Government or from groups of Indians who did not accept his philosophy.⁸ Of his own fasting Gandhi said:

It does not mean coercion of anybody. It does, of course, exercise pressure on individuals, even as on the government; but it is nothing more than the natural and moral result of an act of sacrifice. It stirs up sluggish consciences and it fires loving hearts to action.⁹

Gandhi can be charged with inconsistencies at this point. Although he occasionally recognized coercive elements in his strategy, he tended unduly to restrict the instances in which he would admit this. In March 1918 when Ahmedabad strike began to show signs of weaknesses, Gandhi announced his much-publicised use of fasting as a form of Satyagraha. The mill-owners complained that they were being morally blackmailed.¹⁰ As mentioned before, Ambalal Sarabhai was a friend of the Gandhi family and his sister Anasuyabehn was Gandhi's chief lieutenant in organizing the strike. So Ambalal was increasingly at odds with his wife, as well as with his sister.

The object of the fast was to rally the workers. Nevertheless, it could not but affect the mill-owners, some of whom respected and even loved Gandhi. The result was an unintended but a definite pressure on the mill-owners.¹¹ Gandhi insisted that the fast was not directed at the mill-owners, but was for the purification of himself and the strikers. He told the mill-owners that it should not influence

⁸Paullin Theodore, Introduction to Nonviolence, (Philadelphia: The Pacifist Research Bureau, 1944), p. 33.

⁹Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁰Ashe, op. cit., p. 169.

¹¹M.D. Desai, E.K. Dharam Yudh, A Righteous Struggle, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951), p. 45.

their decision, and yet an arbitrator was now appointed, and as he says, "The strike was called off after I had fasted only for three days."¹²

When sent to prison in the second phase of the last civil disobedience movement, Gandhi obtained release by fasting, and he also undertook a fast to procure a modification of the Communal Award. Gandhi did use some forms of coercion without admitting their nature. On the other hand, he usually drew the line at more extreme forms. He admitted that a degree of ostracism was called for against those who would not join boycotts of cloth. However, this was not to be pushed to the complete exclusion from livelihood of the offending person. He also discouraged picketing by sitting or lying down to block a passage, thus forcing opponents to stay out or drive over bodies. Such picketing he considered a form of violence and coercion. Yet his fasts of unlimited duration would seem to have created just as extreme a dilemma for the opposition.¹³ They did involve an element of psychological coercion.

The next question that arises is whether Satyagraha remained nonviolent in practice, as advocated by Gandhi in theory.

We have seen that out of three political nonviolent non co-operation and civil disobedience movements, Gandhi suspended two of these for reasons of violent outbreaks in the masses and the third one for very trivial gains. Why did these movements fail to be nonviolent as envisaged by Gandhi?

¹²M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1940), p. 195.

¹³Harvey Seifert, Conquest by Suffering: The Process and Prospects of Non-Violent Resistance, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), p. 113.

First of all, Gandhi did not make due allowance for the human nature. The basic assumption of Satyagraha is the essential goodness of human nature which is bound to triumph over temporary aberration if faced with love and suffering on the part of his opponent or rather the victim of that temporary aberration. As Gandhi himself said, "Whilst Satyagraha hates all evil and would never compromise with it, it approaches the evil-doer through love. The Satyagrahi has infinite trust in human nature and in its inherent goodness."¹⁴

Gandhi emphasized the fact that the very high ideal of Satyagraha could be practiced by even the common people for achieving their political ends. Thus he said, "I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of nonviolence is for the common people as well. Nonviolence is the law of our species as violence is the law of brute."¹⁵

Believing that nonviolence is the most efficacious in the face of the greatest violence, he confidently asserted: "Even a heart of flint will melt in front of a fire kindled by the power of soul. Even a Nero becomes a lamb when he faces love."¹⁶ He was willing to apply this in modern times also. He claimed: "Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand nonviolent villages. He would himself become nonviolent in the process."¹⁷ In reply

¹⁴Diwaker, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁵R.C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. III, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mudhopadhyay, 1963), p. 10.

¹⁶Gopinath Dhawan, The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951), p. 270.

¹⁷Mahadev Desai, "The Hour of Trial," Harijan, November 4, 1939, p. 331.

to the argument that Hitler and Mussolini were incapable of moral response, Gandhi said: "Your argument presupposes that dictators like Mussolini or Hitler are beyond redemption. But belief in non-violence is based on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advance of love." If Hitler and Mussolini were met with nonviolence, he continues, "it is not only likely, but I hold it to be inevitable, that they would recognize the superiority of nonviolent resistance over any display of violence that they may be capable of putting forth." Besides, according to Gandhi, nonviolent techniques do not depend on the goodwill of dictators, but on the "unfailing assistance of God." A resister's faith in this "makes him indomitable."¹⁸

Gandhi might be right in his awareness of God's help and men's general potentiality. He was wrong in overlooking that human nature is not "one" in its response to God and in its realization of the divine potentiality within. He underestimated the pervasiveness of sin and the depth of the rebellion that is also possible for man.

Secondly, though Gandhi could have used these nonviolent techniques successfully in certain social and cultural contexts, but using them for political objectives was asking for too much. It may be accepted that change can occur and persuasion can succeed in certain cases where negotiations can bring about the interplay of reasons and compromise. Persuasion is possible and compromise is permissible in many conflicts in which we get involved in our daily life, but persuasion is not always possible and compromise is not always permissible, particularly

¹⁸Pyarelal, "Non-Violence and World Crisis," Harijan, December 24, 1938, pp. 394-395.

when principles of life or vital interests of man-kind are involved. In such cases, a real situation of conflict does arise. And these cases can be resolved only through the use of force, coercion or atleast some kind of pressure and not by purely nonviolent means as advocated by Gandhi.

Nehru had a more realistic approach on this issue. When Gandhi suspended the mass civil disobedience of 1921-1922 after the violent outbreak in Chauri Chaura, it was greatly resented by many Congress leaders. Nehru emphasized that it was impossible to guarantee against the occurrence of some such untoward incidents. He wrote:

Must we train the three hundred odd millions of India in the theory and practice of non-violent action before we could go forward? And, even so, how many of us could say that under extreme provocation from the police we would be able to remain perfectly peaceful?¹⁹

There is still another side of the picture. Besides the actual incidence of physical violence, that invariably broke out in the nonviolent non co-operation and civil disobedience movements launched by Gandhi, does not the very concept of non co-operation itself imply some kind of violence? Isn't a boycott of a cloth manufactured by men who rule the state by violence, itself an act of violence against those wage earners who are deprived of their livelihood? In the case of general strike, is provision to be made for feeding of those who are deprived of their regular supplies? As asked by Mulford Sibley:

Voluntary acceptance of hardship is well and good, but in the interests of a presumably higher political ethic, what is the ethical status of an act of nonviolent resistance

¹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, Nehru on Gandhi, (New York: The John Day Company, 1941), p. 39.

which results in hardship on those who belong neither to the ruling class nor to the group of resisters?²⁰

Arthur Moore has equated Satyagraha with mental violence.

He has criticized the high spiritual claim made for the theory of non-violent non co-operation because it draws a spiritual distinction between physical and mental violence. According to him nonviolent non co-operation "is a method of fighting which is open to unarmed people, and is on par with boycott and strike, which are indeed parts of its technique ... it is not a distinctly spiritual weapon any more than is armed rebellion."²¹

Again any kind of success that was achieved by these nonviolent movements was not wholly due to the nonviolent spirit of Satyagraha itself, but here India was fortunate in having British as the rulers. The practice of nonviolent non co-operation could be effective only if both sides observed the rule of the game. That Gandhi's use of Satyagraha received aid from an enlightened foe was suggested by Rajendra Prasad, President of India and a dedicated Gandhian, after the achievement of Indian freedom. Speaking about the British Imperialists in January 1953, Prasad said: "They had set a limit to their own action below which the British could not and did not go, and we must admit, we must confess that Gandhi's success was due very largely to himself and his people but also the the British."²²

²⁰Mulford Sibley, The Political Theories of Modern Pacifism, (Philadelphia: The Pacifist Research Bureau, 1944), p. 38.

²¹S. Radhakrishnan, Mahatma Gandhi, Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work, (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1939), p. 192.

²²Quoted in Paul F. Power, Gandhi on World Affairs, (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1960), p. 30.

The British as opponents were decidedly different than the Nazis would have been. Although civil rights were infringed upon, nevertheless Gandhi reaped the advantage of considerable freedom of speech, not only in India, but for news reports and public discussions in Great Britain and in other countries of the world. He faced leaders who were comparatively humanitarian and who were often liberal in general social outlook.

Again there is a distinction between those who employ nonviolent methods of opposition on the basis of expediency and those who refuse to use violence on the basis of principle. In the minds of many pacifists the movement for Indian independence under the leadership of Gandhi stands out as the supreme example of a political revolt which has insisted on this principle, and hence as a model to be followed in any pacifist movement of social, economic, or political reform. Gandhi's writings and actions give one an ambivalent feeling on this issue. In his article entitled, *The Doctrine of Sword*, written in 1920, Gandhi wrote:

When the only choice is between cowardice and violence I advise violence. I cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing. But to him who has not this courage I advise killing and being killed rather than shameful flight from danger. I would wish violence a thousand times rather the emasculation of the race. I would rather have India resort to arms to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner remain in helpless victim of her dishonour. But I believe that nonviolence is infinitely superior to violence.²³

This gives one the impression that Gandhi placed the end above the means. But his other writings give the feeling that nonviolence

²³Quoted in Jawaherlal Nehru, Towards Freedom, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), p. 81.

was a creed with him. It was an end in itself. As noted earlier, end and means were interrelated and sometimes convertible for him. He reserved the use of Satyagraha for action on principle, and assigning the term 'passive resistance' to action undertaken as a matter of expediency. The first he considered the voluntary choice of spiritual strength, the second a decision forced by physical or material weakness. For him, nonviolence was to be that of the brave.

Gandhi insisted that, ideally, nonviolent resistance should be, for participants, an expression of a nonviolent way of life. For, if the nonviolence remained purely expedient, it would more easily break down before increasing brutalities by the opposition.

Gandhi wanted his people to accept nonviolence as a creed. One should adopt nonviolence as the law of life, not only because it will serve the purpose, but because one has reached that level of moral development at which violence is intolerable. In 1931, in the mass Civil Disobedience movement launched against the salt law and other unjust laws, when certain reports of violent outbreaks were reported to Gandhi, he wrote: "I would welcome even utter failure with nonviolence unimpaired, rather than depart from it by a hair's breadth to achieve a doubtful success."²⁴

When the Second World War broke out, Gandhi was completely convinced that India ought not to take part in the War in any circumstances. He even wrote an open letter to the British people appealing to them that they should not fight with Hitler, but oppose him by spiritual force.²⁵ He ultimately suggested to the Congress Working

²⁴R. Palme Cutt, India To-day, (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1940), p. 329.

²⁵Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India Wins Freedom, (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1960), p. 29.

Committee that India must declare its stand in this international crisis. His view was that India must not participate in the impending war in any circumstances, even if such participation meant the achievement of Indian freedom.²⁶

This gives one the impression that Gandhi believed in non-violence as a creed, as an eternal virtue and as a supreme way of life to which even the freedom of India could be subordinated. But still, a more careful analysis of his activities would betray a tendency on Gandhi's part to equate expediency with principle.

At the time of the Boer War he had not yet adopted nonviolence as a fundamental creed, but his sympathies were with the Boers.²⁷ He was aware of the wide-spread feeling that the war against the Boers was not justifiable. Yet he unreservedly supported the British against the Boers. "My loyalty to the British rule drove me to participation with the British in that war."²⁸ He used the expedient argument that if the Indians helped the British and they won, the latter might look more kindly on the former.²⁹

In 1914, some years after advocating the virtues of ahimsa to the Indian settlers in South Africa, Gandhi actively worked for the British cause in the First World War, recruiting on behalf of the

²⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁷ Gandhi, An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth, op. cit., p. 214.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 214.

²⁹ Frank Moraes, India Today, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 84.

allies and organizing Red Cross relief.³⁰ According to some sources, he was with difficulty prevented from offering himself as a combatant soldier.³¹

Gandhi did not defend himself, but rather took up the position that all human existence is built up on evil, and our choice is rather confined to taking the lesser of the two evils than to the avoidance of evil altogether. He wrote:

There is no defence for my conduct in doing ambulance work, weighed only in the scales of Ahimsa. I draw no distinction between those who wield the weapons of destruction and those who do Red Cross work. Both participate in war and advance its course; both are guilty of the crime of war. But even after introspection, during all these years, I feel that in the circumstances in which I found myself, I was bound to adopt the course I did both during the Boer War and the Great European War.³²

There were, Gandhi argued, two courses open to him - cooperation or complete opposition. Lacking the power to oppose, he had to cooperate. But this argument does not hold very good if Gandhi was really wedded to the principle of nonviolence as such, because in this case, he might have simply kept quiet.

Again, though up to August 1942 he had argued with his colleagues that if the only way of achieving independence was to participate in the war he for one would not adopt it, Gandhi stated in 1944

³⁰Gandhi, Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth, op. cit., p. 347.

³¹Moraes, op. cit., p. 86.

³²C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1929), p. 140.

that the Congress would cooperate with the British war effort if India were declared free.³³ This volte-face again shows that Gandhi used the doctrine of nonviolence as a principle and as an expediency interchangeably.

Only in 1941 Gandhi issued an appeal to the British, asking them to give up arms and oppose Hitler with spiritual force. Not content with addressing a letter to the British people, he even met Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, and urged him to accept his point of view and communicate it to the British Government.³⁴ But "after independence Gandhi approved of the air transport of Indian troops in defence of Kashmir."³⁵

Now let us see if Gandhi's colleagues believed in nonviolence as a matter of principle or expediency. It should be obvious to anybody who understands the real significance of nonviolence, that none but a saintly person can really observe it in actual life, and it was beyond the power of ordinary men, including even those who played a prominent role in Indian politics under Gandhi's leadership. They made no secret of the fact that they adopted nonviolent non-cooperation as a political expedient but not, like Gandhi, as a creed.

Even though the Indian National Congress adopted the policy of nonviolent non cooperation in its annual session of 1920, it was not adopted as a creed. As Nehru wrote:

But for us and the National Congress as a whole
the nonviolent method was not and could not be

³³ Azad, op. cit., p. 109.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

³⁵ Moraes, op. cit., p. 85.

a religion or an unchallengeable creed or dogma. It could only be a policy and a method promising certain results, and by those results it would have to be finally judged. Individuals might make of it a religion or incontrovertible creed. But no political organization, so long as it remained political, could do so.³⁶

Again when, during the Second World War, Gandhi saw that the war was devastating the world and he could do nothing to prevent it, he tried to persuade Azad that if he (Gandhi) were powerless to stop the suffering caused by the war, he could at least refuse to be a witness to it by putting an end to his life. Azad, however, did not agree to Gandhi on this point and he wrote in his autobiography: "I thought over the matter deeply but I could not bring myself to agree. For me, nonviolence was a matter of policy, not of creed. My view was that Indians had the right to take to the sword if they had no other alternative."³⁷

Subash Chandra Bose had little faith in nonviolence and none in the doctrine of purity of means. In his opinion, Gandhism had been found wanting because it was wedded to nonviolence.³⁸

Gandhi himself admitted, though late in life, that none of his followers believed in Satyagraha as a creed, though some accepted it as a political expediency in the absence of any more suitable way to fight the battle of India's freedom - implying thereby that they would change it the moment they felt that some other course of action

³⁶ Nehru, Nehru on Gandhi, op. cit., p. 42-43.

³⁷ Azad, op. cit., p. 39.

³⁸ Martin Deming Lewis, Gandhi: Maker of Modern India? (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1965), p. 93.

would be more helpful in achieving independence. This was the reason why, as Gandhi admitted himself in 1932, even fourteen years of trial had failed to yield the anticipated result.³⁹

Whether Gandhi was able to create a creed of nonviolence among the common masses is a question to which I will return later after analyzing Gandhi's approach towards another great end of his life, that is, Hindu-Muslim unity.

Even while Gandhi was in South Africa he had come to realize that there was no genuine friendship or good feeling between the Hindus and Muslims of India. He was deeply aggrieved and he strongly felt the need of establishing cordial relations between the two communities. But when Gandhi returned to India in 1915, he remained very lukewarm towards the activities of Jinnah for bringing Hindus and Muslims together. But towards the Khilafat Movement, his attitude was completely different. "The moment he got his chance to join the movement, he felt like a war-horse and plunged into battle with his whole heart."⁴⁰

Resentment against the British for their treatment of Turkey drew the Indian Muslims towards the Hindus. Muhammad Ali (one of the Ali brothers), who had openly proclaimed that he was a Muslim first and an Indian after, sought the help and support of Gandhi in this crisis for Turkey, and Gandhi readily agreed because he thought that such a chance of winning over the Muslims would never come in a hundred years.⁴¹

³⁹Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1958), p. 18.

⁴⁰S.K. Mujumdar, Jinnah and Gandhi, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966), p. 53.

⁴¹R.C. Majumdar, History of Freedom, op. cit., p. 63.

So the Khilafat Movement was organized under the leadership of Gandhi. Gandhi wrote in a letter to the Viceroy that the safety of the British Empire depended upon the just treatment of the Khilafitist demand and of the Indian's claim to Home Rule. In other words, he attached equal importance to the independence of India and satisfaction of the claim of Indian Muslims regarding the integrity of Caliph in Turkey. Rather, it can be said that he even gave priority to Muslim claim; for he invoked his most potent weapon, namely Satyagraha, for the first time against the government, not for the Home Rule of India, nor for the redress of Punjab atrocities, but for enforcing the Muslim demands. Gandhi's backing of the Muslim claim, even to the extent of giving it priority over Home Rule, baffles all rational explanation.

But this Hindu-Muslim unity over the Khilafat Movement was never based on any firm foundation. To believe that any effort to help the Muslims on this occasion would forever secure the Hindu-Muslim unity, only betrays a lack of full knowledge regarding the growth of Muslim nationalism. Muhammed Ali laughed at the idea that the Muslims would make matter up with the Hindus because something happened to the Muslims outside: He very pertinently asked:

What has the Muslim situation abroad to do with the conditions of the Indian Muslims? Either their interests come actually into conflict with those of the Hindus, or they have been all along guilty of a great political meanness and hypocrisy ... Have the questions that really divide the two communities lost their force and meaning? If not, **then** the problem remains exactly where it was at anytime in recent history. Boards of arbitration, peace syndicates and solemn pacts about cows cannot solve it any more than we can by a spell of

occult words control the winds and tide. The communal sentiment and temper must change, and interests must grow identical before the Hindus and the Muslims can be welded into an united nationality... Any attempt to impose artificial unity is sure to end in failure, if not in disaster."⁴²

These words are significant in a way. They show that Muhammad Ali was convinced that there were questions that divided the two communities, and as long as they were not solved, a pact such as was made during the Khilafat agitation could not solve the Hindu-Muslim problem.

But there is a far more serious objection to Gandhi's polity. However opinions might differ as to the basic elements that constitute a nationality, there is a consensus of opinion on one point. Different groups of people living together cannot constitute a nation unless they have a common sympathy, agreement and interest, such as does not subsist between any one of them and any nation outside these groups. If a hundred million Muslims in India felt more vitally interested in the welfare of Turkey and other Muslim States outside India than that of India herself, they could hardly be regarded as a unit of the Indian nation. By his own admission that the Khilafat question was a vital one for Indian Muslims, even more vital than Home Rule for India, Gandhi himself put a seal of approval to the oft-repeated claim of Indian Muslims that they formed a separate nation, that they were in India but not of India.

In any case, this attempt of Gandhi to support the Khilafat Movement as a means to bind the Hindus and Muslims into eternal

⁴²K.P. Karumakaran, Modern Indian Political Tradition, (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1962), pp. 276-277.

bonds of brotherhood failed completely. Once the temporary Hindu-Muslim friendship born out of the Khilafat Movement ended, there were numerous Hindu-Muslim riots in various places. The old feud between the two communities appeared again with renewed vigour, after the brief interlude of non cooperation - cum-Khilafat campaign. Indeed, the suspension of the non cooperation movement almost immediately broke open the dam which had stopped the flow of communal passions, and they now swept in torrents the whole country for the next quarter of a century. The Khilafatist Movement itself was blown out of existence by the action of Kemal Pasha, who had liberated Turkey but showed no concern for the holy places of Islam, and finally abolished the Caliphate. Thus the ground was cut from under the feet of the Khilafatists and the movement died a natural death. The need for a common front against the British having thus disappeared, the Muslim politics again resumed its communal character. We may now briefly refer to some of the riots between the Hindus and Muslims in 1923-24.

One of the worst communal riots broke out in Calcutta in May, 1923. It arose out of an Arya-Samajist procession playing music while passing before a mosque. The Arya-Samajists contended that they were merely following a regular practice which was never objected to before, while the Muslims asserted that the music disturbed their religious prayer. So fighting commenced and continued for several days in course of which there were many casualties on both sides. There were a series of riots on July 15, 1924.⁴³

Another serious riot broke out in August, 1924, in Gulbarga. The Mohammadan mobs attacked all the Hindu temples in the city, numbering

⁴³ Majumdar, History of Freedom Movement, op. cit., p. 278.

about fifteen, and broke the idols. The police were eventually obligated to fire. Next morning the Muhammadans did considerable damage to the Hindu shops and houses. All the temples within the range of the mob, some fifty in number, were desecrated, their idols broken, and their buildings damaged.⁴⁴

The more serious outbreak occurred at Kohat in N.W.F.P., a predominantly Muslim area. On the morning of September 9, 1924, the Muslims looted and burnt all the shops of the Hindus. On the night of September 10, the Muslims made a number of breaches in the mud walls of the city, and committed wholesale plunder and incendiarism, the alleged provocation being firing from some Hindu houses. Before noon there were widespread fires in the Hindu quarters. The Deputy Commissioner and Brigade Commander were unable to prevent the raid, and apprehending that there was a grave danger of wholesale slaughter of the Hindus, removed them to the Cantonment. Later on, Hindus were removed to Rawalpindi.⁴⁵

There were riots at Lakhnau on September 13 and 14, 1924, and the military had to be called in. Serious efforts were made by the eminent leaders of both communities to eliminate the causes of discord by drawing up an agreed covenant guiding the relation between the Hindus and Muslims.

Gandhi's heart was naturally filled with sadness and sorrow when he found that the citadel of Hindu-Muslim unity which he had built and regarded as based on strong and stable foundations, tumbled down like a house of cards. He decided to do penance in the form of a fast for twenty-one days.

⁴⁴I.A.R., 1926, II, p. 312.

⁴⁵Majumdar, History of Freedom Movement, op. cit., pp. 278-79.

How far Gandhi's fast had any salutary effect on the communal relations may be judged by the fact that four days after Gandhi began his fast there was a serious communal riot at Shahjahanpur in which the military had to intervene and nine were killed and about one hundred injured. On October 8, 1924, when Gandhi broke his fast, there were serious communal riots at Allahabad, Kanchrapara near Calcutta, and at Sagar and Jubbulpore in C.P.

The Hindu-Muslim relations continued to grow worse in 1925-26. No less than sixteen communal riots occurred in 1925, the most serious being those at Delhi, Aligarh, Arvi and Sholapar. One of the worst communal riots broke out in Calcutta on April 2, 1926 over the question of music before the mosque. There was burning of houses and looting of shops; both mosques and temples were desecrated. Riots continued in full fury on April 3, 4 and 5. According to official reports, forty-four persons died and five hundred and eighty-four were injured as a result of the riots. There were also riots in the interior of Bengal, at Rawalpindi and Allahabad. It was calculated that between 1922 and 1927 approximately four hundred and fifty lives were lost and five thousand persons were injured in communal riots.⁴⁶

The failure of Gandhi to achieve his great ideal of Hindu-Muslim unity was inevitable. He accepted as fact, a purely imaginary fraternity, and completely ignored the fundamental differences between the Hindus and the Muslims, based on history, culture and tradition.

Even though they lived together in one village and might see each other every day of their lives, Muslims and Hindus were never part

⁴⁶Statutory Commission's Report (1928), Vol. IV, Part I, p. 106.

of the same community. They differed in religion, in morals, in diet, in dress, in education, in family laws. They did not eat in one another's houses, and their children did not intermarry. Under such circumstances, physical nearness bred suspicion, not comradeship.⁴⁷

The prospect of the end of British rule brought apprehension to many Muslims. On the one hand it meant freedom and independence, but on the other hand it might mean the permanent status of a minority under the domination of an alien and unsympathetic majority. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who is rightly called the founder of Pakistan, said:

We are opposed to a united India constitution with Central Government, Federal or otherwise. We are opposed to this because it will mean our transfer from the British raj to the Hindu raj. A United India means a Hindu racial and cultural majority dominating over Muslims whose civilization, culture and social structure of life is totally different.⁴⁸

But neither Muslims, nor Jinnah had contemplated the erection of a separate state during the early stages of Muslim nationalism, i.e. by the end of the nineteenth century. The Muslims were a minority in India, outnumbered three to one by the Hindus. The share of the middle class - commercial, professional and official - was far smaller. Therefore, they asked for protection against being overwhelmed by the larger community. In particular, they wanted a reserved quota in the public services and special provision to ensure Muslim representation in the legislatures. In 1906, the Muslim community made its first organized political move. A deputation under Aga Khan asked the Viceroy for

⁴⁷George McTurnan Kahin, Major Governments of Asia, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1928), p. 419.

⁴⁸Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad, ed., Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah, (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1947), p. 380.

special safeguards in the event of an extension of representative government. Later in the same year, the Muslim League was formed at Dacca in East Bengal.

It would be wrong to suppose that from the establishment of the Muslim League, there was nothing but antagonism between this party and the Congress. It was the attitude of Congress led by Hindu revivalists that drew the two organizations apart. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, joined Congress in 1906, before he became a member of the League in 1913. As soon as he joined the League, he made his impact felt there as he tried to bring its aims in a line with the Congress ideals. In the very year in which he joined the Muslim League, he made it pass the following resolution:

The All-India Muslim League places on record its firm belief that the future development and the progress of people of India depend on the harmonious working and cooperation of the various communities and hopes that leaders of both sides will periodically meet together to find a modus operandi for joint and concerted action in questions of public good.⁴⁹

Mr. Jinnah's services in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and his efforts to bring the Congress and the League together were very much appreciated all over the country among all sections of the people. Sarojini Naidu paid him the glowing tribute of an ambassador of the Hindu-Muslim unity.

The Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress ended with the Congress-League Agreement which passed down to history as "Lucknow Pact". According to this pact, separate and special electorates were conceded to Muslims. Jinnah stood for separate electorates

⁴⁹ Majumdar, Jinnah and Gandhi, op. cit., p. 23.

for the Hindus and Muslims, not so much to strengthen the Muslim's separatist tendency, as to bring them up to the economic and cultural level of the rest of India.⁵⁰

Jinnah's ideas about Muslim nationalism can be judged by his neutralist attitude towards the Caliphate movement which had virtually affected all Muslims. "He believed that a false religious frenzy coloured Indian political activity which would ultimately do more harm than good to India in general and Muslims in particular."⁵¹

Here was a man Gandhi should have given recognition to, if he really wanted to achieve his ideal of Hindu-Muslim unity. But Gandhi, in a way, ignored Jinnah, the ardent Congressman, the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, but hugged to his bosom fanatics like the Ali Brothers, who were only known for their Pan Islamic activities and who had little interest in Indian freedom.⁵²

But, maybe, Gandhi and Jinnah simply could not work on the same plane. They were poles apart in their personalities. Gandhi approached the masses through their hearts, captivating them with his charismatic qualities. Jinnah reached the people through their minds. Their aims were the same: both wanted complete sovereign status for India, but their methods were different. Jinnah believed in achieving freedom for India through evolutionary constitutional methods. Gandhi, on the other hand, regarded constitutional parliamentary methods as only one of the means of achieving the liberation for India. He appealed

⁵⁰ Hafeez Malik, Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan, (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1963), p. 250.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 250.

⁵² Majumdar, Jinnah and Gandhi, op. cit., p. 58.

to the religious sentiments of the Hindus with a view of strengthening them politically. Gandhi delved into the inner recesses of Hindu mind and from its historical experiences created Satyagraha. But Jinnah believed that to stir the masses by way of their emotions was a sin.⁵³ He left the Indian National Congress in 1920 because it adopted Gandhi's doctrines. Jinnah was the last bridge between the Moslim League and the Indian National Congress. When he broke away from the creed of Hindu-Muslim unity, the movement to gain Pakistan gained momentum.

But even though Jinnah left the Indian National Congress, his faith in Hindu-Muslim unity did not weaken immediately after. Jinnah attended the first two of the three Round Table Conferences held in London between 1930 and 1932 to settle the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. Muslim delegations in the Conferences made it clear that no advance was possible or practicable, whether in the Provinces or in the Central Government, without adequate safeguards for the Muslims of India, and that no constitution would be acceptable to the Muslims of India without such safeguards.⁵⁴ But here was Gandhi again who wanted to represent both Muslims and Hindus, and all the way through he fought for the joint electorates instead of separate electorates which had formed the basis of the 1916 Lucknow Pact.

There were times when Gandhi was not a member of Congress, after he had resigned and was devoting himself to social work. Nevertheless every one knew, even children in school, that his word was law. This annoyed Jinnah. He came to the conclusion that if he worked with

⁵³Malik, op. cit., p. 251.

⁵⁴Majumdar, History of Freedom, op. cit., p. 371.

Gandhi, he and his people would occupy a subordinate position. This his pride would not take.

There is no doubt that Gandhi, subtle as he was, failed dismally to comprehend Jinnah. As the years passed, and the two men grew older, the differences between them widened. For once, Gandhi forgot that there could be a pride greater than his own. The fact is that Gandhi failed to make Jinnah a member of the great Indian family. The separation of Hindus and Muslims, engineered by Jinnah, is the greatest tragedy that has occurred in the history of the subcontinent. And Gandhi cannot escape his share of the blame, much as he worked for the union of the two communities.⁵⁵

But the greatest blunder that Congress committed (which antagonized the Muslims permanently) under the leadership of Gandhi was in the formation of ministries in 1937. In the provincial elections of 1937 the Congress, having won a majority in five provinces and emerged as the strongest single party in two others, decided to form ministries in seven provinces. Throughout the discussions leading up to the 1935 Constitution, it had been assumed that representatives of the minorities would be included in the provincial governments. But when Jinnah suggested a coalition Ministry of the Congress and the Muslim League, the Congress refused to entertain any proposal that might have the appearance of representing the Muslims as a separate political unit. As observed by Majumdar:

The Congress virtually refused to form a coalition ministry with the Muslims unless they liquidated the Muslim League and repudiated

⁵⁵Ranjee Shahani, Mr. Gandhi, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 183.

all vestiges of their claim to form a separate political entity. Nobody, who had any knowledge of the background of Muslim politics, could imagine for a moment that the Muslim League would commit political hara-kiri at the bidding of Congress.⁵⁶

Gandhi gave his quiet approval to Congress's stand. This was the turning point and a signal for the parting of the ways which, by inevitable stages, led to the formation of Pakistan. Jinnah now finally realized that the Muslims, as a separate community, had no political prospects in India. They had no chance of sharing political power with the Hindus; they must either surrender their individuality or cut themselves adrift from the Hindus.

In March 1940 the Muslim League, at its annual session of Lahore, declared that Hindus and Muslims constituted two separate nations and that India should be divided to provide separate homeland for each. Seven years later "Jinnah was to lead his followers, like a Moslem Moses, into the Promised Land."⁵⁷

Gandhi held to the last that partition could be effected only over his dead body. But at last the doctrinaire yielded to the realist. Gandhi had, evidently, hoped against hope to work a miracle by nonviolence. But Jinnah's 'Direct Action' proved to be a more effective weapon for achieving independence than Satyagraha. Violence triumphed over nonviolence.

Again, though Gandhi pleaded for Hindu-Muslim unity, all the way through by his personal conduct and public activities he emphasized

⁵⁶ Lewis, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

⁵⁷ Moraes, op. cit., p. 82.

the heterogeneous character of the elements of which India was composed. The life, manners and speech of Gandhi were those of a Hindu par excellence. He drew his inspiration, principally, from the Hindu holy book, the Gita. He talked of Indian independence as Ram Raj, the rule of the Hindu god, Rama; struggle for it, to him, was dharama yudh, which to anyone would mean Hindu religious war. "The Hindu mind is myself,"⁵⁸ Gandhi once observed. Although non-conformist in many ways, the mainsprings of his thought were essentially Hindu; and to him, for instance, nonviolence was not so much a social as a religious doctrine.

Talking about the Boer War Gandhi related, "there came a greater awakening among them, and the feeling that Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Tamilians, Gujeratis and Sindhis were all Indians and children of the same motherland took deep root amongst them."⁵⁹ But there was very little difference in his mind between the concepts of "motherland" and "Hinduism". The hierarchical divisions of Hindu society was a settled fact for Gandhi.

Gandhi's views on the caste system were fully elaborated by him in 1920-21 in a Gujerati journal. He believed that if Hindu Society had been able to stand, it was because it was founded on the caste system. He said:

To destroy caste system and adopt western European social systems means that Hindus must give up the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of the caste

⁵⁸ Beverley Nicholas, Verdict on India, (Oxford: Alden Press, 1944), p. 167.

⁵⁹ Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 216.

system. Hereditary principle is an eternal principle. To change it is to create disorder.⁶⁰

Gandhi said he was opposed to all who were out to destroy the caste system. Thus in 1922 he was a defender of the caste system. Later, in 1925, Gandhi gave a critical view of the infinite castes existing in India. Asked about the remedy, he suggested that all small castes should be fused and there should be only four big castes.⁶¹

Gandhi did take a number of fasts and toured all over the country to bring about a change in Hindu's attitudes towards Untouchables. But he never asked them to assimilate the Untouchables. Though Gandhi asked Untouchables to get higher education and acquire more learning, he emphasized that they must follow their hereditary profession, that of scavenging.

In fact, Gandhi did not attack, or ask for the liquidation of, the Hindu system of caste which was the supreme barrier between the Hindus and the Muslims. He rather expressed his view in these words, "I am one of those who do not consider caste to be a harmful institution. In its own origin caste was a wholesome custom and promoted national well-being."⁶²

But caste does not promote national well-being. Rather, it emphasizes separatism. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar held that the spirit of separatism is endemic in Hinduism. He wrote:

⁶⁰Cited in B.R. Ambedkar, What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables, (Bombay: Thacker and Company Limited, 1946), p. 287.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 289.

⁶²R.C. Casey, An Australian in India, (London: Hollis and Carter, 1947), p.

The real genius of Hinduism is to divide... for what else do caste and untouchability stand for? Obviously for separation, for caste is another name for separation, and untouchability typifies the most extreme form of separatism of community from community.⁶³

The fundamental assumption of Hindu social organization is that a man is born - must be born - in one of the four castes and must remain in it and die in it. None can enter the fold; none can get out of it. It is strange that Gandhi did not realize that it was this institutional exclusiveness that militated against Hindus, as a whole, having a fellow feeling for the Muslims or the Untouchables, whose cause he publicly espoused.

Gandhi was an ardent exponent of Hindu-Muslim unity. At the same time he looked upon the problem of unity with the eyes of a Sanatni (orthodox) Hindu. He believed in idol worship and Islam regards all idolators as sinful. He venerated the cow. He regarded 'cow protection' as the central fact of Hinduism.

Mahatma Gandhi, indeed, made the survival of Hinduism conditional upon the cult of cow for he said, "Cow Protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world; and Hinduism will live so long as there are Hindus to protect the cow."⁶⁴ But cow is not a sacred animal for Muslims. Cows are not uncommonly slaughtered in the name of Islam and in the pre-partition days, this incensed the illetrate Hindus almost beyond endurance.

Claiming to be a sanatni Hindu, Gandhi believed in Varnadharma which preaches strict separation of caste from caste and Hindu from Hindu.

⁶³ Andrews, op. cit., p. 38.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

He did not regard that inter-marrying and inter-dining were essentials for Hindu-Muslim unity. He was rather against these in principle. "It was due to this ambivalence in Gandhi's approach to Hindu-Muslim relations that, notwithstanding his obvious sincerity, he could not win the confidence of the Muslims."⁶⁵

The more we study Gandhi's own life and teachings, the more certain it becomes that the Hindu religion has been the greatest of all in shaping his ideas and actions. James Andrews writes about the influence of Gandhi's mother on him (Gandhi):

But his mother's influence, as a devout and gentle Hindu saint, perpetually returns to his mind and conscience, making the fragrance of the ancient Hindu texts so sweet that nothing else in the world can compare with them, to his own imagination, in beauty and truth and sweetness.⁶⁶

In the end, we can say that Gandhi's roots lay deep in Hinduism. In a way, Gandhism provided a philosophical justification for Hinduism and its dogmas. Because what is there in Gandhism which is not to be found in Hinduism? There is caste in Hinduism, there is caste in Gandhism. Hinduism believes in the law of hereditary profession, so does Gandhism. Hinduism enjoins cow-worship, so does Gandhism. Hinduism upholds the law of Karma, predestination of Man's condition in this world, so does Gandhism. Gandhism, like Hinduism, accepts the authority of Shastras. Hinduism believes in idols, so does Gandhism.

This Gandhism, in the form of Hinduism, could not endear itself to Muslims. Gandhi's biggest mistake was to give invariably a religious touch, which was a Hindu touch, to politics. "One unfortunate

⁶⁵Malik, op. cit., pp. 280-281.

⁶⁶Andrews, op. cit., p. 60.

result of the Mahatma's attempt to give politics a religious hue was gradually to antagonize the Muslims and to deepen their suspicion that his politics was steeped in Hinduism."⁶⁷

Finally, we can say that Gandhi failed miserably in his mission of Hindu-Muslim unity. His anxiety for the cause deserves all praise, but his was a sentimental approach to the problem and was not based on a realistic appreciation of the situation. He perhaps thought that by the magic of nonviolence he would provide synthesis where none appeared possible. He does not appear to have understood the fundamental differences that separated the Muslims from the Hindus and were too deep to be healed merely by slogans of friendship and fraternity. He failed to understand the real cause of tension between the two communities, because he did not study the problem in its true historical perspective. He shared the common views of the Hindu political leaders that the communalistic outlook of the Muslims blocked the progress of Indian nationalism, which they held out as a great ideal. But Hindus forgot that the independence of India would give the majority community all the power and prestige, and the minority would be at their mercy. The Muslims could not forget that not long ago they were masters of Hindus. To be a subject to the British was bad enough, but subjection to the Hindus would be far worse. The Hindu leaders, however, ignored this point of view altogether. Like them, Gandhi also believed that most of the Muslim leaders were inspired by the lofty sentiments of nationalism.

Not only did Gandhi fail to recognize the fundamental differences between the two communities, his own conduct, his combining religion with politics, his emphasis of nonviolent methods of achieving

⁶⁷Moraes, op. cit., p. 83.

independence, his emphasis on joint electorates, and above all, his long roots in Hinduism, further enlarged the already existing gulf. Norman Brown has beautifully remarked:

Even more though Gandhi abhorred Hindu-Muslim communalism and partition, he nevertheless contributed to them. He could not in his time have become the political leader of the majority group in India, fortified by mass support, without being religious. He could not be religious without being Hindu. He could not be Hindu without being suspect to the Muslim community.⁶⁸

Along with his failure in achieving Hindu-Muslim unity in an undivided India, he failed miserably in his corresponding objective to make his country accept nonviolence as the law of life. Gandhi's own principle of nonviolence appeared to go finally into the political discard at the same time as did India's political subservience to Britain.

India was cut into two, and what followed was a great tragedy. Butchery took place in many parts of the country on a vast scale; the collision between Hindus and Muslims was particularly shocking in the Punjab and in Bengal. No one was spared: children were battered to death; women were abducted and ravished; the old and the decrepit were pitilessly slaughtered. It is estimated that nearly eleven million people were uprooted and became refugees; the Muslims trekked to Pakistan, and the Hindus to India. The whole country was in the grip of terror. Neither state can be absolved from blame; each was guilty of criminal negligence.

Before Gandhi passed away he had the mortification to witness bitter hatred and hostility between the two communities growing from bad to worse everyday. The failure of his life's task was emphasized

⁶⁸ Lewis, op. cit., p. 102.

by a series of contests between the two communities, accompanied by the most horrible deeds of cruelty of a brutal nature, as if there was fight between two savage races capable of no thought but that their enemies should be exterminated. He may be said to have failed completely in his mission to create a cult of nonviolence as his countrymen did not rise to the occasion and carry out his teachings. Far from fulfilling his expectations, we may say that they sank even lower than before, when we take into account the appalling outrages and bloodshed which preceded and followed the partition of India.

Gandhi's disillusionment was complete. He had preached ahimsa, nonviolence, when fighting the British; now, among his own people, he saw with horror that his theory had made little impression. For thirty years or more, ever since his return from South Africa, he had put before the public the matchless weapon of nonviolence. Now, in the hour of crisis, and indeed at any moment of danger, this ahimsa had been rejected, and violence voluntarily chosen. In the end, violence carried off the great apostle of nonviolence himself. "He died as perhaps would have liked to - in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and understanding felled by the gun of a fellow Hindu. This was Gandhi's finest hour."⁶⁹

⁶⁹Moraes, op. cit., p. 88.

GLOSSARY

Ahimsa	Non-injury
Caliph	The religious Head of Islam
Dharma	Duty; right course of conduct or action; religion
Duragraha	Stubborn persistence
Duragrahi	One who practices duragraha
Hara Kiri	Suicide
Harijan	Untouchable; literally, people of God
Hartal	Closing of shops and suspension of work
Himsa	Violence; injury
Hind Swaraj	Self-rule for India
Karma	The doctrine of existence conditioned by the sum of good and evil action
Khadi	Hand-spun and hand-woven cloth
Khilafat	The office of Caliph
Lakh	One hundred thousand
Rupee	Indian dollar
Sabha	Assembly; society
Sanatani	A strict follower of ancient Vedic religion; orthodox
Satya	Truth
Satyagraha	Truth-force, or, the technique developed by Gandhi for social and political change, based on truth, non-violence, and self- suffering
Satyagrahi	One who practices Satyagraha

Survodya	Universal good
Swaraj	Self-rule; independence
Taluka	A major administrative sub-division of a district
Tehsil	Sub-district
Varna	Caste; colour
Varnashrama	Four-fold division of Hindu society
Vedas	The earliest religious hymns

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